Resource Materials

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

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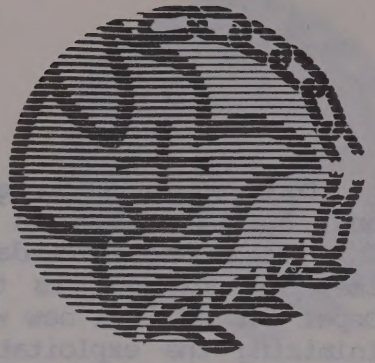
JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION



Resource Materials

THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Besides stressing a caring attitude towards nature - an emphasis that is more evident in the German "Bewahrung der Schöpfung" and in the French "sauvegarde de la création" - the English "integrity of creation" brings together the issues of justice, peace and the environment by stressing the fact that there is an integrity or unity given in God's creation that we disregard and flout at our own peril. The term is proving to be theologically inclusive and ethically challenging. Listen to the statement of the indigenous peoples at the Granvollen consultation on the integrity of creation:

> For the sake of all creation, theology must begin with creation. Just as concerned Christian people have begun to learn that true peace can only be realized through the establishment of justice and that peace flows naturally out of justice, so now we must begin to learn that justice and then peace flow naturally out of a deep respect for all creation. Thus for Indigenous Peoples a much more theologically sound expression would be "CREATION, JUSTICE AND PEACE". Not only is this more satisfying to Indigenous theology, but such a title suddenly begins to reflect the theological content and sequence of the ancient ecumenical creeds of Christianity.

Document 4.1: "Orthodox Perspectives on Creation" uses the Orthodox understanding of the human being as a "microcosm" of the whole creation to stress the inextricable linkage between God, humanity and the rest of creation. Since humanity is endowed with freedom, there could be "a positive or a negative involvement in the God-established order and harmony in the world and for the restoration of this order". Sin is the presence and consequence of a negative involvement resulting in the degradation of human beings (racism, sexism, economic injustice) and the disintegration of creation (the environmental crisis). There is a ringing call for humanity to exercise its priestly function in creation and as co-worker with God to strive with God's grace for a re-integrated and transfigured creation.

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Document 4.2: George Tinker's "American Indians and the Arts of the Land: Spatial Metaphors and Contemporary Existence" expounds the world-view of a people whose foundational intellectual categories are space rather than time. The argument is that a recovery of spatial categories opens up the Gospel for us in a new way, helps us to work with inclusive categories, thus minimizing the exploitation of other peoples and creation, and to pose an alternative to a temporally based understanding of creation that has given rise to and justified the operation of human selfishness and greed in the drive for progress.

Document 4,3: Chief Seattle's lament, "The Land is Sacred to Us", vividly illustrates the injustice that is caused both to humanity and the rest of creation when a rampant temporal concern for progress clashes with and overwhelms people who understand creation primarily in spatial terms.

Document 4,4: In "Our Common Future - A Challenge to the Churches" Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway and Moderator of the World Commission on Environment and Development, challenges the widely held view that the world is both an inexhaustible store of resources for exploitation and a limitless garbage disposal for by-products of industrialization. After pointing to the disastrous consequences of this world-view, she calls for a new vision and a stronger political will to work for "sustainable development" that brings together environmental and economic concerns.

These essays invite the participation of others. Of particular importance in this debate is the feminist critique of patriarchal images of God and the consequent anthropocentric thinking evident in modern science and technology and the industrial mind-set. For example, Sallie McFague Models of God, commenting on imperialist, triumphalist metaphors for God, says "this language is not only idolatrous and irrelevant - besides being oppressive to many who do not identify with it - but it may also work against continuation of life on our planet. Our nuclear capability places human beings ... on the verge of eliminating not only themselves but also most if not all other forms of life on earth."

Document 4,5: "WCC Message for World Environment Day".Document 4,6 and 4.7: Some recommendations for further reading, complete the resource materials on the Integrity of Creation. Document 4,8 presents an overview of what is happening in the world-wide JPIC process.

We regret that we are unable to produce the JPIC Resource Materials in larger quantities and in other languages. Our resources of staff time and finances are limited. We encourage you to translate, adapt and reproduce these materials for wider use and ask that you mention the source. These resources are for your use as you continue your work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 4.1

ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVES ON CREATION

REPORT

Inter-Orthodox Consultation held in
Sofia, Bulgaria, 24 October - 2 November, 1987

Introduction

A group of Orthodox theologians representing twelve Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox member churches of the World Council of Churches throughout the world met in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 24 October to 2 November 1987. The consultation was sponsored by the Programme on **Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation** of the **World Council of Churches** and under the gracious hospitality of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. At the end of the consultation a report on **"Orthodox Perspectives on Creation"** was made available with a special request that it be taken into consideration for the preparation of the WCC Conference on the Integrity of Creation to be held in Oslo (Norway), 24 February - 4 March 1988. The report is specially commended to the Orthodox member churches of the WCC for study, prayer and action.

I THE CREATION

Creation and Holy Trinity

1. We believe that the created world itself is a "mystery" originating in the sovereign will of God accomplished by the action (energeia) of the Holy Trinity. We confess in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed (325/381) that the Father is the "Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible", the Son "He through whom all things were made", and the Holy Spirit, the "Creator of life" (zoopoion). Thus, the three persons created together the world, which is the fruit of the common action of the Holy Trinity issuing out of the one essence.

2. As St. Basil the Great said, "We should understand in the creation the original cause of the Father as a **founding** cause, the cause of the Son as a **creative** one, and the cause of the Spirit as an **implementing** one" (St Basil, **De Spiritu Sancto, P.G.** 32,136 B). Thus, the Father is the "Creator of all things" (Ta panta: **I Cor.** 8:6; **Rom.** 11:36), the Son is the one "through whom all things were made" (**John** 1:3; **I Cor.** 8:6; **Col.** 1:16; **Heb.** 1:2), and the Holy Spirit is the one "in whom are all things" (en o ta

panta **Gen.** 1:2). Everything that he (God the Creator) had made ... was very good" (**Gen.** 1:31), because "first He conceived, and His conception was a work carried out by His Word, and perfected by His Spirit" (St. Gregory the Theologian, **Homily** 38,9, **P.G.** 36,320; cf also St John of Damascus, **De Fide Orth.** 11,2, **P.G.** 94,865).

3. Thus, the action of the Holy Trinity, rooted in the Father, is presented as the 'economy'of the Son and the Spirit: the former bringing God's desire into existence and the latter perfecting it in goodness and beauty; the one calling the creation and leading it to the Father, and the other helping the creation to respond to His call and communicating perfection to it. Thus, the creation is the result of the communion (koinonia), close relationship and cooperation of the Holy Trinity. The community of three Persons participates actively in the execution of the whole of God's plan.

Creation "out of nothing"

4. "In the beginning" the Holy Trinity created the world (heaven and earth) "out of nothing" (ex nihilo) and not out of pre-existent matter.The world is a production of God's free will, goodness, wisdom, love and omnipotence. God did not create the world in order to satisfy some need of His. Rather he created it without compulsion and without force in order that it might enjoy His blessings and share in His goodness. God then brought all things into being out of nothing, creating both the visible (oratôs) and the invisible (aôratos).

5. "Out of nothing" (ex nihilo) finds its first expression in the Bible (cf. **Gen.** 1; **John** 1:3; **Is.** 42:5, **Ps.** 33:6). "Beholding the heavens and the earth, and seeing all that is there, you will understand that God has created it all from nothing" (2 **Macc.** 7:28). Thus, the creation springs **into being** or passes into being out of non-being. As St Gregory of Nyssa affirms, "It begins to be, and the very substance of the creation owes its beginning to change" (St Gregory of Nyssa, **Homily** 29, **P.G.** 31,89-91). This transition from non-existence to existence is a change brought about by God's creative Word "who has established the world so that it shall not be moved" (**Ps.** 93:1).

Creation of the Cosmos - Integrity of the World

6. God is the Creator of the world. The world as cosmos, i.e. a created order with its own integrity, is a positive reality. It is the good work of the good God (**Gen.** 1), made by God for the blessed existence of humanity. The Cappadocian Fathers teach that God first creates the world and beautifies it like a palace, and then leads humanity into it. The genesis of the cosmos,being in becoming, is a mystery (mysterion) for the human mind, a genesis produced by the Word of God. As such the world is a revelation of God (**Rom.** 1:19-20). Thus, when its intelligent inhabitants see it as cosmos, they come to learn about the Divine wisdom and the Divine energies. The cosmos is a coherent whole, a created synthesis, because all its elements are united and interrelated in time and space. A serious study of the mystery of creation, through faith, prayer, meditation and science, will make a positive contribution to the recognition of the integrity of the creation. The daily office of the Church (vespers) begins with a psalm which exalts the beauty of this mystery (**Ps.** 104, LXX 103), while the Fathers of the Church often comment on the various biblical passages which describe the integrity of the creation.

Value of the Creation

7. The value of the creation is seen not only in the fact that it is intrinsically good, but also in the fact that it is appointed by God to be the home for living beings. The value of the natural creation is revealed in the fact that it was made for God (something which is beautifully expressed in Orthodox iconography), i.e. to be the context for God's Incarnation and humankind's deification, and as such, the beginning of the actualization of the Kingdom of God. We may say that the cosmos provides the stage upon which humankind moves from creation to deification. Ultimately, however, the whole of the creation is destined to become a transfigured world, since the salvation of humankind necessarily involves the salvation of its natural home, the cosmos.

Human Being as a Microcosm

8. The fact that Adam and Eve were created by God last of all the other created beings and in a different way - not just by the utterance of a Divine Word but by the direct involvement and action of God - indicates not only humankind's excellence and special position in the whole of the creation, but also its special relation to God. According to the Church Fathers **Genesis** 1:26 ff "... Let us make man ..." (poiesomen anthropon) shows that the creation of the human being was the result of a Trinitarian act. Particularly significant in this connection is the statement that "man was made according to the image and the likeness of God". The reference to "the image of God" is to be understood in terms of Jesus Christ, since he is explicitly identified with it (**2 Cor** 4:4; **Col** 1:15; **Heb.** 1:3 ff). Thus for mankind to be in the image of God means to be in, or assimilated to, Christ. This is a matter of grace and act and not a matter of nature, because only Christ is by nature God's image as God's eternal and natural offspring, his only begotten Son. The "likeness of God" is often connected with the grace of the Spirit who assimilates us to Christ.

9. In the created world only the human being combines material and spiritual elements. Human existence is thus differentiated from non-human creation in a qualitative way. In light of this fact, the Church Fathers often speak of the human being as a "little world", a "microcosm" of the whole of the creation. Using this notion, the Church Fathers teach that the human body contains it at all levels of existence of the natural world which preceded it in the order of the creation, and considered the physical elements which make up the human body as in no way different from those which constitute the physical world. This means that the natural world is fully integrated with the human being and the whole of the creation.

10. At the same time, the Fathers' use of the notion of micrososm means that humanity, created in God's image and likeness, transcends the material world because it participates in God spiritually and consciously, unlike the rest of the creation. Humankind then stands on the boundaries between the material and the spiritual worlds (methorion) as a connecting link. It is directly related to the earthly aspect of created existence as well as to the uncreated existence of the Creator. As such, on the one hand, it directly influences our thinking about the integrity of creation, and on the other hand it gives to human nature a dynamic spiritual dimension.

11. St Gregory the Theologian (**Homily** 45,8) says that we are fully involved with the material creation by virtue of our physical existence, and that the material created reality is deeply involved with us. If we move to the direction of deification, our human nature, progressing towards God, will somehow carry the created material world with it. If, however, we move to the opposite direction, the created material world will suffer with us as well (cf. **Rom.** 8:19-22). This means that we are called to exercize dominion over all creatures on earth (cf.**Gen.** 1:28), i.e. to be stewards (oikonomoi) of God's material world, caring for it, maintaining it in its integrity and perfecting it by opening it up to God through our own deification.

The Incarnation as the Renewal of the Creation

12. God's will, wisdom and love for the creation in general and for humankind in particular are revealed in the Incarnation in an inexpressible way. The Son of God, as the one through whom the process of creation was fulfilled, came down from heaven into the world and became fully man, i.e. took the human nature in its integrity and led it to the fulfilment of its God given destiny, deification. The Orthodox Church teaches that the Virgin Mother of God, the Theotokos, is the model of the renewal of humankind and the creation in Christ. In her receiving of the Son of God, the whole humankind and the whole of the creation participates. In the Incarnate God the Father "made known ...his will ... as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him (Christ), things in heaven and things on earth" (**Eph.** 1:10). In other words, Jesus Christ, the Son of God became man, restored and renewed humanity and the whole of the creation, uniting both of them with the Creator in and through Himself. One of the Trinity, then, became Incarnate, became man, revealing his Lordship over the whole of the creation, and showing humanity a Lordship in stewardship and service.

II DISINTEGRATED CREATION

The Human Fall and the Disintegration of the Creation

13. Before their fall the first human beings experienced the creation as one harmonious whole. It was like a beautiful garden (paradeisos, **Gen** 2:8) which they tended with care and love. The human fall, however, which was essentially a sinful exercising of human freedom, introduced forces of disintegration into the body of creation. Humanity experienced a two fold alienation. On the one hand, it was estranged from the Creator, since Adam and Eve tended to hide themselves away from the sight of God (cf. **Gen** 3:8) as their communion with the source of life and light was broken. On the other hand, humanity lost its capacity to enter into a proper relation with nature and with the body of the creation. Enmity between the natural world and human beings replaced the relationship of harmony and care. Domination and exploitation of the creation for selfish ends by greedy human beings became the order of history. Thus, manifold forms of disintegration set in which converged in the fact of death and corruption. Fear of death instilled anxiety, acquisitiveness, greed, hatred and despair in human beings. Modern forms of economic exploitation, racial oppression, social inequalities, war, genocide, etc. are all consequences of the fear of death and collective signs of death.

14. Creation was given to humanity as a gift that they may share it in a eucharistic sense, so that sustainance and fulfilment of life might be achieved. The divine plan assumes that there is a material give-and-take relationship between human beings and the natural world.

15. Sin obscured the glorious image of God in the human person, but it did not efface it completely, as St Athanasius and the whole of the patristic tradition affirmed. St Gregory the Theologian teaches that through the fall humanity lost only its condition of wellbeing, but not its possibility of being. Through the Incarnation of the Word of God the door of salvation was opened to humanity, through which human beings, can enter again into a relation with their Creator which restores them in the divine image and enables them both to secure the being and to regain the lost condition of their well being. It is in this context of the salvation which is offered by God in Christ not only for human beings but also for the whole of the creation that human beings have a special responsibility to exercize their freedom in a way which serves God's gracious activity for the reintegration and transfiguration of all reality.

Human Sin and Forms of Injustice

16. Several issues, which bear the stamp of human sin, should be identified and underlined because they exemplify some of the glaring forms of injustice and disintegration which we experience today (cf. **Habakkuk** 1:3; **James** 5:4). They should be given serious and immediate attention by the Church and all people of goodwill. They call for the urgent exercise of Christian responsibility towards the creation and for the practical manifestation of the Christian concern for the human person and the human community; recognizing their shortcomings in the past in this respect, Christians have now also to show their solidarity with all people of goodwill in fostering the forces of justice for manifestation of the kingdom of God in humankind and in the whole Creation.

Poverty and Economic Injustice

17. The poverty of millions of people in some parts of the world and the accumulation of unmerited wealth in some other parts reveal us the demonic face of injustice created by human beings in God's creation. It has become clear today that political, economic and technological forces, operating at transnational levels, can arbitrarily inflict poverty and socio-economic crises wherever they want, as well as inordinate and unjust affluence. Two thirds of humanity suffer from the loss of the dignity, which is one the chief marks of the divine image in the human person. Consumerism, profligate styles of life, exaltations of money and material values, catering to illegitimate pleasures of the senses, greedy competition for material success, etc. are other prominent elements of the syndrome of injustice which results in the increasing impoverishment of our world.

The Environmental Crisis

18. Environmental issues like air and water pollution, depletion of non-renewable resources, destruction of the ozone layer, increasing nuclear radiation, deforestation and desertification of vast areas, etc. threaten the

life itself on this planet. The gifts of science and technology are being misused by human beings to the extent of abusing nature and turning today's life on earth into a hell, not only for the many millions of existing people but also for the generations to come. The voice of those who call for a just development, equal distribution of resources and ecological life-styles is being systematically suppressed. Advances in bio-technology and genetic engineering need to be seen in the light of the Holy Spirit because without adequate knowledge of the transcendent (divine) vocation and spiritual nature of humanity, these new techniques run the risk of initiating biological turmoil which incurs disastrous mutations and is extremely dangerous for the true life on earth. While human creativity and freedom can be affirmed as supreme gifts of God, it should also be emphasized that they should be rooted in divine wisdom and in human spiritual maturity.

Racism and Discrimination

19. It is a great insult to the God-given dignity of human beings that various forms of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, creed and culture are practised in our world today. Very often an alliance between dominant economic forces and powerful political forces supports and helps to maintain racial, political, cultural and religious discrimination. The cry of millions of people who are oppressed because of their race or their cultural identity is a serious concern of all Christians and of all other people of goodwill. Racial discrimination with all its violent and inhuman manifestations is one of the tragic consequences of colonial and imperialist domination. Christian faith affirms that diversity of race and culture reflects the beauty of God's creation. To deny the inherent right of people to affirm their identity with self-respect, dignity and openness to others is a sin against God's creation.

Injustice to Women

20. Injustice to women all over the world is another sign of the human fall and the disintegration of the creation. In many parts of the world, women's dignity as human beings is trampled upon through sexism, inequality in wages and discrimination. The conditions of life in many parts of the world are such that women are subject to physical and mental harassement, insults and insecurity. There is a genuine issue of injustice towards women and the churches need to be seriously concerned with this.

21. Orthodox Church calendars have a long list of women martyrs and saints. Orthodox women participate responsibly in the teaching of the Christian faith, diakonia, church choirs and other vital activities in the life of the Church.

22. But one has to admit that, due to certain socio-historical factors, the women have not been always provided oportunities for active participation in the Church's life at parish and diocesan levels.

The Arms Race

23. Production and sale of arms and the accumulation of nuclear weapons by nations constitute a grave affront to human dignity and to the cause of justice in the creation (cf. **Is.** 2:4; **Ezek.** 39:10). Much of the misery and

suffering of many human beings today can be traced to the demonic world of arms race and arms production. Nations plunder the bread-bowls of humanity to create weapons of death in the name of national security or defense against enemies. So many of the human resources are today dedicated to the arms race that all other efforts for the improvement and betterment of the human condition suffer from lack of adequate resources. Not only is butter traded away for guns, but also much needed social reforms, or constructive economic development programmes, or the commitment of funds for medical research, for the healing of all kinds of illnesses, for increased educational opportunities, and for a host of humanity-benefiting projects are set aside. The arms race forces humanity to trade away its birthright for a full and good-like existence in exchange for a militaristic bowl of pottage (Gen. 25:27-34). This is the distinctive sin of the 20th century, for not only does this attitude and pursuit destroy many potentialities and opportunities for human growth and development, but threatens humanity itself with the ultimate sin of nuclear destruction.

III THE TRANSFIGURED CREATION

Jesus Christ Saviour and Redeemer

24. The terrible consequences of sin in all of its manifestations in humanity, in society and in the environment make it imperative for all human beings to search for ways and means to do away with the evil which has accumulated in the world at the present time.

25. Christians confess that, "left to itself", humanity is unable to rid itself of the power of sin and its consequences of corruption and death. Humanity is incapable of saving itself (Rom. 3:10-20). Salvation can only come from Almighty God, the Holy Trinity. Sin was perpetrated by humanity through its exercising of free will. On the other hand, the redemption from sin is a perfect act of God's will "who is love" (I John 4:8). Thus, salvation is a divine answer to the evil which "exists" parasitically in the whole of the creation. The essence of salvation is expressed in the sacrifice of the Godman, our Lord Jesus Christ, on the Cross and His victory over death, sin and evil, through His Resurrection: "... so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we (human beings) too may walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

26. Thanks to Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, every human being and the whole of the creation receive the gift of victory over sin, evil and corruption (Col. 1:14-17). Death did not triumph on Calvary. Christ is risen. Christ's resurrection is a solid and fundamental hope for every believing human being in the struggle against evil in all of its manifestations. It is already a guarantee of the ultimate triumph of life and therefore a hope for the salvation of every person and of the entire creation.

27. The New Testament reveals the eschatological reality of the new, renewed and perfected world - the New Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 4:26; Rev. 21:10). In the Eucharist one is given to live and experience the world which is in unity with God, and to enter into communion with the eschatological world (Jn. 6:26 ff). This new reality, granted by the Holy Spirit, is present in the Church, its sacraments, diakonia, witness and thought. Having thus received

spiritual vigour and hope as with Christ through this vision, Christians see their responsibility to transfigure - always with God's grace - creation in both a spiritual and a material way. The eschatological vision thus creates prerequisites for this effort on the part of Christians to work for justice and peace and the integrity of creation (cf. **Rom.** 8:18-24).

28. Furthermore, the views about an inevitable and necessary nuclear destruction of God's creation (the so-called "Armagedon concept" found in sectarian fundamentalism) are, according to Orthodox teaching, completely unfounded and provoke new sins. According to God's promise and Testament, after the flood, such a destruction will never occur (cf. **Gen.** 8:21-22).

Human Freedom and Response

29. Humanity receives everything from God as a gift (cf. **Rom.** 3:23-24; 1 **Cor.** 12:4-7), but it receives salvation with an active participation in it (cf. **Thess.** 5:23). The redemptive sacrifice on the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ form a blessed and dynamic reality involving the free response of humanity. Already, at its creation humanity was imbued with the dynamics of creative development through the grace of God's image which was given to it.

30. Consequently, human beings have been able to become co-workers with God responding to his calling them to be creatively masters to tend and transform the world in harmony with the divine will and purposes. In as much as humanity was created in the likeness of God, it was entrusted with the task of perfecting not only human nature, but also the created nature which forms its natural habitants. Conversely, in perfecting the created world humanity contributes to its own perfection. Thus salvation goes beyond the framework of the individual human being and moves into the wider sphere of social diakonia in the Church, the society within the Church finds itself and the wider sphere of the entire created world.

31. The understanding of salvation as a gift from God bears upon the free response of human beings both in the way they think and in the way they act. By participating in the divine grace humanity experiences both the good works and the good will of the Creator. Human beings became "partakers of the divine nature" (cf. 2 **Peter** 1:4) and for this reason they are instructed to respond through a certain way of life (cf. 2 **Peter** 1:2-11), which implies sharing the image and likeness of God both on the personal and the social planes (cf. **Rom.** 12). The fact that God has endowed humanity with freedom (cf. **Gal.** 5:1) creates the opportunity for a positive or a negative involvement in the God-established order and harmony in the world (**sedeq**) and for the restoration of this order (**sedeqa**) (cf. **Amos** 5:21; **Gen.** 30:33).

32. Hence, humanity has been given the responsibility to work together with the grace of God in the process of salvation for personal transformation of all humanity and for renewal of the earth which is our home.

33. In the course of appropriating salvation to itself, humanity brings about the transfiguration of the material world as well, which is also God's creation, since both the spiritual and the material form are the one reality of God's creation. Thus, Transfiguration is granted to both, the human being and the material creation. The creation exists for humanity, while humanity

exists as a microcosm which is designed to bring the whole of the creation to sanctification and to fulness of life, by bringing it into communion with its Maker.

How Shall Christians Respond?

34. It is by the grace of God, which comes from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit that human beings are given to follow their Lord Jesus Christ, by existing for each other in self-sacrificing love, in affirming peace and justice and in collaborating for the restoration of the integrity of the creation.

35. There is always the need for the faithful to draw on the sacramental treasures of the Church in order to live a life of prayer and ascetic discipline for personal growth in God-likeness, so as to make themselves ready to follow their Lord in the service of their fellow human-beings. This includes taking care of social structures of their bodily and spiritual needs in Christian service (diakonia). This life of selfless dedication ministers to the needs of the integral human being (soul and body) as well as that being's social milieu. It is the expression of true discipleship. "I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (cf. Mt. 25:35-37). Christians are called to respond to the problems created by human sin against justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, by taking appropriate action. "For God is at work in (us), both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Thus the churches need to be vigilant against evil forces that operate in subtle and in overt ways against the forces of life and truth in our world.

Economic Injustice

36. As churches of Jesus Christ we must challenge the sins of imposed poverty and all forms of economic injustice. We have a special responsibility to struggle for an economic order which is based on genuinely spiritual and moral values. This means we must become knowledgeable regarding the powers and forces which perpetuate economic injustice. Our pulpits cannot ignore the just needs of the economically abused. Christians in places of power need to exercise it in the spirit of Christ and against those institutional structures which perpetuate the conditions which keep poor nations and peoples subservient to the economic super-powers (cf. Deut. 15:9). Positively we need to encourage efforts at international interdependence, co-operative economic enterprise and economic support of the developing peoples and nations, always with due respect for their human dignity and integrity.

A Reintegrated Environment

37. The environmental crisis is a sin and a judgment upon humanity. We need to find ways, as churches, to support sound programmes which seek to preserve from pollution of air, water and land. To speak of the reintegration of creation today is first to speak words of repentance and to make commitments toward the formation of a new way of living for the whole of humanity. The contemporary world must repent for the abuses which we have imposed upon the natural world, seeing it in the same kind of relationship to us as we see the unity of our human nature in both body and soul. We must begin to undo the

pollution we have caused, which brings death and destruction to the mineral, vegetative and animal dimensions of the world environment. We must work and lobby in every way possible to us in our different situations to encourage the scientific community to dedicate the good potentials of science and technology to the restoration of the earth's integrity. For ourselves, this means a recommitment to the simple life which is content with necessities and - with the Church Fathers - sees unnecessary luxuriousness as the deprivation of necessities owed to the poor. In all of its aspects, concern for the reintegration of the creation calls Christians to a new affirmation of self-discipline, a renewal of the spirit of asceticism appropriate to Christians, regardless of their status, position or condition. In short, we must see the created world as our own home, and every person in it as our brother and sister whom Christ loves.

38. Words, however - even changed attitudes - will no longer suffice. Wherever we find ourselves, as Christians we need to act in order to restore the integrity of creation. A creative, cooperative, active and determined plan of action is required for implementation.

Respect for Human Dignity

39. We must deplore the sins which repeatedly tear apart the fabric of our common and shared humanity: racism, prejudice, discrimination. Our Lord's deep and compassionate concern for "the least of His brethren" cannot but provoke every Christian who takes seriously the call of discipleship to repent of our own abuses of justice and to raise our voices on behalf of the oppressed. One aspect of the Christian mission to the world today is to be truly apostolic in restoring fallen humanity to its divine-human dignity, as manifested in Christ. For this the Church has to express its deep-rooted commitment to justice in concrete and relevant ways in our time. We must affirm, loudly and clearly, the truth that God's image is present in every human being. We need to seek out and actively cooperate with all forces of good working for the eradication from God's creation of all forms of prejudice and discrimination. We ourselves must teach our people to respect the integrity and dignity of all peoples of every nation, economic condition, race, sex, political affiliation, so that reconciliation and tolerance may replace coercion and violence in our relationships. Our goal is nothing less than the reign of God's love among all peoples.

Women in the World and the Church

40. Both in personal attitudes and in institutional life the world has a long history during which women have been unjustly treated, and their essential humanity as God's image and likeness has not been fully respected. Such sinful divisiveness is not acceptable from an Orthodox Christian perspective (cf. 1 **Cor.** 11:11). In the world recreated by Christ, both male and female dimensions are integrally related to each other (cf. **Gal.** 3:28). The genuine harmony between these two dimensions is a symbol of the integrity of creation in its diversity. We Orthodox must recommit ourselves to the truth of our faith according to which women's true dignity is as "joint heirs to the grace of life" (cf. 1 **Pet.** 3:7) existing together with men. We must raise in our consciousness the important affirmation of our faith that, as members of the Body of Christ, women share in the "royal priesthood" (cf. 1 **Pet.** 2:9) of all believers. It is of fundamental importance in the Orthodox Church that a

woman became the mother of our Incarnate Saviour and that she remains the model par excellence of the integral humanity to which all Christians, men and women, aspire. Historically, we have always recognized in the Church the diaconal (cf. **Rom.** 16:1; **Tim.** 5:9-10) witnessing (cf. **Mt.** 28:10) and nurturing roles of women (cf. 2 **Tim.** 5:9-10). In particular, Orthodox men must acknowledge that, as full members of the Church, women share in the intercessory vocation of the Church to stand in the presence of the Lord on behalf of all creation. In concrete terms we must find means to allow the considerable talents of women in the Church to be devoted as fully as possible in the Lord's service for the building up of the Kingdom. This means more opportunities for theological education for women and the opening of career opportunities in the Church for women. Serious consideration must be given to the re-introduction of the ancient order of Deaconess by the hierarchies of the local churches.

Towards a Peaceful World

41. In the messianic prophecies one of the specific actions of men in building the new world is disarmament. The people of the messianic age are presented as hammering their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks (cf. **Is.** 2:4). The prophet Ezekiel speaks about making fires of the abandoned weapons. The people - says this prophet - "will not need to take wood out of the field or cut down any out of the forest, for they will make their fires of the weapons" (cf. **Ez.** 39:10).

42. Orthodoxy condemns war, which it considers to be the result of evil and sin in the world. The arms race has reached such proportions that its consequences go far beyond legitimate needs for defence. As Orthodox we must continuously affirm the strong bias of our Church for peace so evident in our liturgical life and in the writings of the Church Fathers. St Nicholas Cabasilas says that "the Christians, as disciples of Christ who made all things for peace, are to be 'craftsmen of peace'" - (technitais eirenes) (Life in Christ, P.G. 150, 676). One of the foremost responsibilities which we have today is to engage in a concerted struggle against the arms race as an evil force in our day. We must clearly declare our position on behalf of a reduction of armaments affecting all kinds of arms: both conventional and nuclear, on land, at sea, in the air and in outer space, especially in view of the fact that nuclear war can destroy all life on our planet.

43. Because we live in a new age of potential total destruction, our ongoing concern for peace takes on a greater intensity. We must join others of good will to work for peace in the world, and people must be pressured to give up the arms race and seek alternate ways of security and development for all peoples. Above all, Christians should continue to pray constantly for peace and to support all initiatives for peace based on justice.

Other Concerns

44. Many other tasks relating to the integrity of creation and the world in which we live face us. Among these we mention two without developing them. Orthodox Christians and churches need to enter more fully and more responsibly into intellectual discussion of the major problems related to the integrity of creation; the considerable resources of the Orthodox faith must be brought to bear on these problems together with the insights of other faiths. This makes

it imperative for the churches to use all means at their disposal, including communications/mass media to witness to the faith, especially to youth. We need a deeper and more studied approach to the contemporary issues which face us. Among those are the problems of the modern family and the stress it faces, including powerful forces seeking its disintegration.

CONCLUSION

45. We confess that God is the creator of all that exists, beautifully and wonderfully made, a fitting manifestation of his glory (cf. Ps. 103). But we stand today before a wounded creation which suffers under distorted conditions which are the result of the sin of humanity. In our selfishness and greed we have used our otherwise good technological abilities to exploit God's creation, to destroy the balance of nature and to deform what God originally made to be in wholesome communion with us and with Him. Creation is no longer integrated with humanity nor is it in harmony with God. In fact, it stands in danger of conflagration, in the face of nuclear war.

46. The creation needs to be reintegrated, but this can happen only as it is brought once again into communion with the Lord, so that it may find its fullness of purpose and its transfiguration. Humanity can no longer ignore its responsibility to protect it and preserve it. In order to do this, however, humanity must learn to treat the creation as a sacred offering to God, an oblation, a vehicle of grace, an incarnation of our most noble aspirations and prayers.

47. Just as bread and wine are lifted up as an offering for the sanctification of the world and all people in the Eucharist, a sacramental approach to the creation is needed for its reintegration.

48. We specifically recommend to all Orthodox churches and all Orthodox Christians that special support be given to the work of the WCC programme for "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" as it prepares for the forthcoming Convocation on JPIC in 1990.

49. The Lord God created His universe and all that is in it as an integrated whole. Today, we have brought about disintegration in what God intended to be integrated. We call upon individuals, nations and churches to give effect to a vision of the rightful harmony between the human dimension and the mineral, plant and animal dimensions of the creation. In spirit and in body, we are called to offer the whole of God's creation back to Him as a sacrament and as an offering cleansed, purified, restored for His sanctification of it.

50. O God, "the things that are Yours, we offer them to You according to all things and for all things. Amen." May this be our prayer for the "integrity of God's creation".

Sofia, November 1987

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 4.3

"THE LAND IS SACRED TO US"
Chief Seattle's Lament

The Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. The Great Chief also sends us words of friendship and goodwill. This is kind of him, since we know he has little need for our friendship in return. But we will consider your offer. For we know that if we do not sell, the white man may come with guns and take our land.

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us.

If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man — all belong to the same family.

So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us. The Great Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably to ourselves. He will be our father and we will be his children. So we will consider your offer to buy our land. But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us.

The red man has always retreated before the advancing white man, as the mist of the mountain runs before the morning sun. But the ashes of our fathers are sacred. Their graves are holy ground, and so these hills, these trees, this portion of the earth is consecrated to us. We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. He leaves his fathers' graves behind, and he does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children. He does not care. His fathers' graves and his children's birthright are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways. The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand.

There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring or the rustle of insect's wings. But perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand. The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am a red man and do not understand. The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond and the smell of the wind itself, cleansed by a midday rain or scented with the pinon pine.

The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath — the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breaths. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. And the wind must also give our children the spirit of life. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred, as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to accept, I will make one condition: The white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers.

I am a savage and I do not understand any other way. I have seen a thousand rotting buffalos on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing

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Chief Sealth of the Duwamish League, known to us as Chief Seattle, delivered this speech in 1854—one year before a great treaty-making council was held between fourteen Indian tribes and the U.S. Government. The government proposed that reservations be established, and although several tribes opposed this, treaties were signed: each of the fourteen tribes was to select its favorite home valley as its reservation. Three months later, war broke out. The conflict lasted three years and broke Indian strength in the Northwest. Ironically, Sealth was a strong American ally throughout. Little else is known of his life.

train. I am a savage and I do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.

What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. All things are connected.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we agree, it will be to secure the reservation you have promised. There, perhaps, we may live out our brief days as we wish. When the last red man has vanished from this earth, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, these shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people. For they love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So if we sell you our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it as we've cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it. And with all your strength, with all your mind, with all your heart, preserve it for your children, and love it . . . as God loves us all.

One thing we know, Our God is the same God. This earth is precious to Him. Even the white man cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We shall see.

This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know: All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

But we will consider your offer to go to the reservation you have for my people. We will live apart, and in peace. It matters little where we spend the rest of our days. Our children have seen their fathers humbled in defeat. Our warriors have felt shame, and after defeat they turn their days in idleness and contaminate their bodies with sweet foods and strong drink. It matters little where we pass the rest of our days. Tribes are made of men, nothing more. Men come and go like waves of the sea.

Even the white man, whose God walks and talks with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all; we shall see. One thing we know, which the white man may one day discover — our God is the same God. You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the red man and the white. This earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator. The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Continue to contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man. Your destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. And what is it to say goodbye to the swift pony and the hunt? The end of living and the beginning of survival.

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 4.2

American Indians and the Arts of the Land: Spatial Metaphors and Contemporary Existence

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The function of the land and the spatial imagery that derives from it is foundational for American Indian thought and for the arts generated by American Indian Cultures. That is the thesis of this paper.

For all the diversity in American Indian cultures, there are consistent threads of continuity. One significant difference between Euro-American culture and all American Indian cultures has to do with structures of cognition. In particular the foundational categories of cognition may be so disparate as to render all attempts at cross-cultural understanding most difficult. Yet the disparity has evidently been subtle enough to have been overlooked by the vast majority of scholars who have observed and attempted to interpret American Indian life and thought. As a result, while American Indian art forms may be widely appreciated at an aesthetic level, I suspect they are little understood contextually.

At stake here are the categories of space and time and their relative functions in Euro-American and American Indian cultures. As I have argued elsewhere, it seems to be the case that all American Indian cultures build their intellectual foundations on spatial categories while the western intellectual tradition builds on a temporal base.[1] The result of this distinction is to clarify the root difference in world views between the two groups and to articulate finally the nature of the difference.

The western intellectual tradition has shifted decisively over the past two millenia away from a spatial foundation to a temporal priority. This is not to argue that the west has no sense of space. Nor is it to argue that American Indians have no sense of time, no matter how dear the stereotype of "Indian time". The question here is priority. For the immigrant culture, time is primary; space is a subordinate category. For American Indians, I would argue, the reverse is true: the temporal is subordinate to the spatial.

The western world's religion is firmly rooted in temporal categories and may have a primary focus on a hope for the future that goes back to Jesus himself.[2] It is instructive to note that the west has not generated any substantial philosophical inquiry into the nature of space. Yet western philosophy has dealt repeatedly with theoretical issues in regard to time -- from Book XI of Augustine's Confessions to the temporal synthesis of history in Hegel's Philosophy of History, to Heidigger's Being and Time and now the process philosophy and theology of Whitehead, Hartshorn, Cobb, and Brown. Science, too, has contributed to the west's clarification of its temporal base, beginning with Aristotle, who defines life (pneuma, spirit) in terms of movement, to Darwin's notion of a temporal evolution of the species, and finally to Einstein and the modern theories of relativity, which finally reduce space itself to an explicit temporal notion.

American Indian religions, on the other hand, are universally rooted in some notion of space/land/creation, no matter how diverse the forms of that rootedness may be. As it is with Indian religion, so it is with daily life, social mores, ethics, and Indian thought in general. And, of course, American Indian art must also be interpreted from this per-

spective. For Navajo people that rootedness begins with a communal perception of where they come from. There is a particular mountain which they identify as the place of emergence, the place where they came from the underworld into this world.[3] As Deloria says, "Now there is no doubt in any Navajo's mind that these particular mountains are the exact mountains where it all took place. There is no beating around the bush on that. No one can say when the creation story of the Navajo happened, but everyone is fairly certain where the emergence took place."[4]

The importance of the land to American Indian peoples has been widely known among non-Indians, although it always seems to surprise most North Americans. This can be seen by looking at a variety of sources. It can be seen, for instance, in the words of Indian persons themselves recorded in historical anthologies[5] and in popular recorders of Indian culture,[6] in histories of Indians,[7] and in translations of tribal stories--especially the origin stories that form the basis of a tribe's cosmology.[8] It can be seen again in the formal structure of a tribe's ceremonial worship. Here there are no propositional statements, but rather symbolic representations, both verbal and visual.[9] The very structure of a traditional Indian village or town quite often will also be a symbolic representation of cosmic-spatial relationships.[10] It should not be surprising that Native American Indian art would also demonstrate land relatedness in a variety of symbolic ways.

Today, the importance of the land to Indians is becoming more and more apparent in the political arena -- much to the discomfort of many people in North America.[11] As one after another Indian Nation goes to court or to Congress attempting to win land claim issues, more and more voices are heard describing the motives of those tribes in derogatory

terms.[12] The fact is that these Indian Nations are winning often enough to pose a threat, both emotionally and economically, to the descendents of the immigrants who displaced Native Peoples from the lands in question.

In a country where "possession is nine-tenths of the law" and perhaps more significantly in a country where the values of the dominating culture are shaped by a religion of time and eternity progressing ireversibly toward the furture, there is little inclination for dealing with disputes over aboriginal land claims. Given the religious value of temporal progression in immigrant culture, the connection between land claims of present day native peoples and the injustice perpetrated against their ancestors so long ago is less than self evident. The immigrants tend to suspect that Indian people, having failed to understand the ethics of work, are simply out to get as much economic benefit with as little effort as is possible.

In truth, the motives of Indian people are not primarily economic.[13] Rather the Indians are motivated by the religious value which they put on the land in general and on their own land in particular. The religious value of the land is something which white society neither shares nor understands, as Sealth pointed out in 1855:[14]

> We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of the land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. He leaves his fathers' graves, and his children's birthright is forgotten. The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand."

In short, the land is a profoundly theological issue here. At stake are two very different theologies, two very different starting points for viewing the world, two very different ways of praying. This difference,

measured in terms of the land, was immediately apparent to Sealth and to many Indian people during the years of their first encounter with the immigrants.

It is all the more surprising that a great number of non-Indian scholarly interpreters of the American Indian world, in academic disciplines such as anthropology, history of religions, and the like, can write about a tribe or American Indians in general without significant theoretical comment about the relationship between land or space and cultural values. This situation is changing somewhat, under the influence of Alfonso Ortiz, an anthropologist who is himself an American Indian (Tewa/San Juan Pueblo).[15] Ortiz' emphasis on the role of spatial categories for Tewa society has been generalized for the whole American Indian world by another Indian scholar, Vine Deloria, Jr.[16] A few non-Indian scholars, like Sam Gill, a historian of religion, have begun to follow the lead of Indian scholars, but unfortunately, they do not yet have a solid feel for this aspect of Indian metaphysics, so their efforts are inconsistent.[17]

Interestingly enough, Benjamin Lee Whorf, a linguistics scholar, rather early isolated the priority of space for Hopi peoples based on a study of their language.[18] Whorf argues that Hopis have no word for time, per se, and that the complex Hopi verb system has no tense differentiation. Instead, Hopi verbs differentiate a variety of spatial categories, even if space itself is understood in quite a different way for Hopi people. Unfortunately, again, Whorf did not have either the interest or the philosophical insight to interpret fully what his findings might say to immigrant-Hopi relationships, nor does he attempt to generalize for other American Indian languages.

In another context I have pointed to historical claims that American Indian people have made with regard to the special relationships between Indians and the land.[19] Most of those claims were spoken when one tribe or another was being pressured into yet another cession of land to the invading immigrant forces. They all reflect an intimacy deeply rooted in each tribe's self-understanding. And that self-understanding begins with the mythology out of which each tribe lives, in particular the stories of the tribe's beginnings.

The art forms of Indian America are likewise rooted in the mythological structure of the peoples and relate first of all to the land/earth/space as a sacred center that generates all things. For the purposes of this paper, I would like to deal more directly with the mythological, moving from generalizations about some traditional stories and architectural structures to the contemporary understanding of the sweat lodge ceremony. Each of these is, of course, a native American art form. Then I will conclude with a brief commentary on some contemporary American Indian painting.

Corn Mother

For tribes with horticultural interests, stories recounting the origin of planting take on enormous significance. Most importantly these stories show the link between the land, food, people and the ancestors who are buried in the land. The story of Corn Mother, for instance, is much more than an interesting but fanciful story of a simple people in need of simple explanations of the world. To the contrary, it is a complex story which helps establish the foundation for a consistent cosmological whole. To that extent it is a theological

story.

Now the people increased and became numerous. They lived by hunting, and the more people there were, the less game they found. They were hunting it out, and as the animals decreased, starvation came upon the people. And First Mother pitied them.

The little children came to FirstMother and said: "We are hungry. Feed us." But she had nothing to give them, and she wept. She told them: "Be patient. I will make some food. Then your little bellies will be full." But she kept weeping.

Her husband asked: "How can I make you smile? How can I make you happy?"

"There is only one thing that will stop my tears."

"What is it?" asked her husband.

"It is this: you must kill me."

"I could never do that."

"You must, or I will go on weeping and grieving forever."

Then the husband travelled far, to the end of the earth, to the north he went, to ask the Great Instructor, his uncle Kloskurbeh, what he should do.

"You must do what she wants. You must kill her," said Kloskurbeh. Then the young man went back to his home, and it was his turn to weep. But First Mother said: "Tomorrow at high noon you must do it. After you have killed me, let two of our sons take hold of my hair and drag my body over that empty patch of earth. Let them drag me back and forth, back and forth, over every part of the patch, until all my flesh has been torn from my body. Afterwards, take my bones, gather them up, and bury them in the middle of this clearing. Then leave that place."

She smiled and said, "Wait seven moons and then come back, and you will find my flesh there, flesh given out of love, and it will nourish and strengthen you forever and ever."

So it was done. The husband slew his wife; and her sons, praying, dragged her body to and fro as she had commanded, until her flesh covered all the earth. Then they took up her bones and buried them in the middle of it. Weeping loudly, they went away.

When the husband and his children and his children's children came back to that place after seven moons had passed, they found the earth covered with dark, green, tasseled plants. The plants' fruit -- corn -- was First Mother's flesh, given so that the people might live and flourish. And they partook of First Mother's flesh and found it sweet beyond words. Following her instructions, they did not eat all, but put many kernels back into the earth. In this way her flesh and spirit renewed themselves every seven months, generation after generation.

And at the spot where they had burned First Mother's bones, there grew another plant, broad-leafed and fragrant. It was First Mother's breath, and they heard her spirit talking: "Burn this up and smoke it. It is sacred. It will clear your minds, help your prayers, and gladden your hearts."

The story of First Mother, Corn Mother, as she is called by many

tribes, is told with variations by a great many tribes in the eastern part of the continent. Whatever one may decide with regard to the historical origins of the Christological features of this Penobscot telling of the story does not diminish the extent to which it and all the Corn Mother stories define the sacredness of the land.

With her death and burial, Corn Mother becomes identified with the land, not only in that mythological place but wherever the people cultivate her gifts of corn and tobacco (and a variety of other foods in other tellings of the story). In a sense, of course, all the ancestors become one with the land where they are buried. And, too, they continue to participate in this world in that they give sustenance to all that grows out of the land. One sense of immortality among Indian peoples is rooted in this bond between earth, land, their ancestors and themselves. Not only is the land sacred where the ancestors are buried, but, as those who live on the earth continue to harvest the earth's goodness, they are bound all the more intimately with the ancestors.

But Corn Mother, as First Mother, functions here in a different way. She is more than just one of the ancestors, and her identity with the earth is far more encompassing. Corn Mother becomes the main provider of sustenance for all people at her death. She lives on in her identity with the earth and takes on the same significance and function that a great many American Indians call Mother Earth and/or Grandmother.

For many eastern tribes the identification of Corn Mother with the earth resulted in an ordering of cosmology that restricted the main agricultural activity to the women, while the men in this division of labor were the hunters -- as in this story. Men might help in the gathering of a harvest, but only women could cultivate and plant. Be-

cause of their own sacredness as the bearers of fertility, they are the human reflection of the earth's fertility, the appropriate counterpart of the Corn Mother.

Emergence Stories

The sacredness of the land is underscored in another way by a wide variety of tribes whose origin stories tell of a primordial emergence out of the earth. Many of these tribes, like the Navajos, continue to revere particular geographical locations as the site of emergence, the place where these people first entered this world.[21] The emergence story is a birthing narrative.[22] Whether or not the earth is called mother, she functions symbolically as such as human beings leave the womb at the moment of emergence. Among some tribes of the southwest underground structures (kivas) function as places of ceremonial nurture, initiation rites, and as the symbolic place of emergence out of which participants emerge to begin many outdoor ceremonials.[23] Again, the relationship between a community of people and the land is established in story and reinforced in ceremony and community structure. And the life giving myth of the earth as mother or grandmother continues among a great many tribes today.

The Structure of Community: Native American Architecture as Art of the Land

For many American Indian nations the very structure of their community reflected and in many ways still reflects their mythology. This is at least superficially clear in the descriptive work of early non-Indian observers, such as Radin and Gifford,[24] and should find its theoretical explanation in the complex analyses of structural anthropo-

logists like Levi-Strauss.[25] Indeed the very complexity of the analysis may interfere with a satisfying conclusion. The structuralists are very often too engrossed in the exegesis of kinship relations, geographical structures, or mythology structure to notice how these all come together in simple activities of people. Levy-Strass would even warn observers not to take the Native peoples' explanations too seriously, since they may be "unaware of certain elements" of their social organization, or in some cases "contradict it completely."[26] Without underestimating the importance of these scholars, it might be possible to point to a simplicity rooted in a spatial notion of existence. This is the great contribution of Ortiz, in demonstrating the intimate conection between the spatial, mythological, kinship and moiety structures in the day to day life of the San Juan Pueblo.

Another, earlier, American Indian writer, John Joseph Matthews, approached his own tribe in a different manner from Ortiz. Matthews spent part of a lifetime listening to Osage elders and reports their understanding of themselves.[27] While this may certainly be naive at one level, as Levy-Straus would insist, it does allow us to see how the people viewed themselves and to demonstrate the importance of spatial relationships.

Like the Winnebagos, the Miwoks, and countless other tribes, the Osages had a very complex society in which the spatial arrangement of the village reflected the great variety of relationships between people and indeed the entire world. The Osage village was divided into the two major (exogamous) divisions of the tribe, the Hunkah, or earth people, and the Tzi Sho, or sky people, combining both "from the earth" and "from the sky" origin stories. While there are two grand divisions, the

number of balance and harmony is four. Each division, then, was further divided, and each of these consisted of several exogamous clans. The two chiefs of the village came from the two grand divisions, the Hunkah providing the war chief and the Tzi Sho the peace chief. These chiefs lived in two large lodges in the middle of the village, separated by a road that divided the village from east to west, the path of the sun, into the Hunkah, the south side, and Tzi Sho, the north side of the village.

Such a division does more than illuminate the complex marriage rules of the society. It functions also at a spiritual level. Thus these two divisions symbolically hold together heaven and earth, and serve to remind the people of the reality they live as a community and the responsibility they have to both father above and mother below. That reality and responsibility is also mirrored in the village, since exogamous relationships thoroughly bind the two (and four) sections into a single and balanced whole. Thus spatiality connects religion with neighborhood living arrangements and with family and clan structures. The balance and harmony of the universe is reflected in the land where the people live. It is repeated in each village and again in each family and clan, consisting, as they must, of both Hunka and Tzi sho people. Hence, the clans of the Hunka, or earth people, are filled with Tsi sho people by marriage and offspring, and the clans of the Tsi sho are likewise filled with Hunka people, so that the whole of the cosmos, heaven and earth, is contained in each marriage, family, clan, village or division of the tribe. Every individual is only a small part of this greater whole, yet the whole exists in every individual.

The Sweat Lodge and Pan Indian Modernity: Ceremonial Structures as Art of the Land

We have covered the American Indian landscape with rather broad and sweeping brush strokes to try and demonstrate a broad based and ancient attachment to spatial categories that result in land rootedness. Yet the modern Indian person is no more typical today than ever. Not only does the American Indian world consist of a variety of different cultures, but the complexity of modern existence has resulted in different degrees of culturality in any given tribe. On a reservation there will be those who cling to the old traditional ways as well as they can, making dynamic cultural adjustments as those become either necessary or appealing. Others may have grown up on the reservation yet apart from those traditional ways and may know very little about them, while those in the cities are separated by both distance and milieu from the lands that energize tribal spirituality. But all are still marked by a community bonding, and there is today a growing renaissance of what is called "traditional" spirituality, in the urban centers as well as "home" on the reservations. It is to one aspect of this renaissance that I would now like to turn.

Because all cultures are dynamic, this renaissance is resulting in a cultural change not unlike that which has always characterized the Native American world. Aspects of ceremony and belief have long been passed from tribe to tribe, often resulting in anomalies such as a Shoshonean speaking people living a culture that is much closer to that of Tewa and Tiwa speaking peoples. The contemporary shift is toward a more pan-Indian cultural and religious expression. While many tribes have retained a great deal of their land based ceremonial life, others have lost a great deal. Missionary evangelism, spatial dislocation from

their lands, and loss of language are just three of the factors involved in this loss. Nevertheless, these tribes maintain their national identity, and as their young came to grips with that identity beginning in the late sixties, they began to look to other tribes for ceremonial ways in which they might affirm themselves and their beliefs. The ubiquitous pow wow has served this function at a social level for decades, and still continues a healthy existence. But just as the political needs of the times resulted in several political movements like the American Indian Movement (AIM), the spiritual needs called spiritual movements into existence.

In this process a certain pan Indian ceremonial life has emerged -- without jeopardizing those nations with more intact ceremonial systems. Expressions of the movement include smudging rites, the sweat lodge and even the use of the sacred pipe. Most of the tribes of North America have or had a sweat lodge ceremony. Today many Indian people find in the sweat lodge format a ceremony in which people of all tribes can come together in a religious setting where common values, beliefs and concerns can be shared. In a typical off-reservation setting one might find 12 to 15 people, representing 8 to 12 different tribes, participating in a ceremony. Even in a reservation setting up to half of the participants and sometimes more might come from tribes beyond the borders of that reservation.

The sweat lodge, in its pan Indian form as in all its tribal expressions, is a spatially configured ceremony in all of its symbolism and ritual.[28] The round domed framework of the lodge is almost invariably made of willow saplings, usually numbered by a factor of four. This framework is then covered with blankets or tarps, enough to insure total

darkness inside. The domed shape of the lodge itself, the circle which the participants form inside the lodge, the small pit in the earth in the middle of the lodge for holding the rocks, the fire to heat the rocks, the rocks themselves, the water poured over the rocks, and especially the total darkness that envelopes the participants when the lodge is closed for a round of prayer are all cosmic, spatial symbols that are reinforced by the words and songs of prayer. Time ceases when one enters the lodge. There is no regularly appointed day or time for the ceremony; it starts when everybody is ready on a day all have agreed to. Its duration may be as long as three hours or more beginning with the building of the fire to heat the rocks. Space, on the other hand, is important from beginning to end. Entry and exit are both made in a sunwise direction. The openning of the lodge generally faces to the East, unless there is a common fire pit for several lodges, in which case all the openings face to the center.

The sweat lodge, like all American Indian symbols and ceremonies, is polyvalent in meaning. It is a place to pray, a place of purification, a place to suffer vicariously for the community and for all of creation. But prayer is more than words. Prayer consists of actions and the very structures of a ceremony. The circle of participants inside the lodge, for instance, is a prayer in itself. It symbolizes unity and wholeness. More than that, it symbolizes the whole of the nation, and the nation is simultaneously the tribe, that is, one's own people, all Indian people, or the entire nation of two-leggeds. Beyond that, the circle represents all of creation as a sacred whole.[29] Lame Deer goes so far as to say that the sweat lodge contains the whole universe.[30]

Prayer, in this sense, is something that emerges out of the land for Native American peoples. It emerges out of the same Mother Earth from whence we all come. In the sweat lodge, a small pit is dug into the earth in the middle of the circle. Lame Deer calls this the center of the universe.[31] Rocks, which have given their life for the sake of the ceremony and for the cause of the wholeness and harmony of all creation, are heated red hot in the fire and are brought into the lodge to be arranged in this pit. The rocks are a representation of the earth; they are alive, and prayers may be offered to them or on their behalf. The water is another representation of the earth. As the prayers begin in earnest ladles of water, four at first, are poured over the rocks. The steam that results is a merging of earth and heaven, it is Mother Earth communicating with Father Sky, carrying the prayers of the people to the Creator. It is Grandfather's breath itself, blessing all those who endure the intensity of this moment of prayer.

In the darkness of the lodge, suffering in the intense heat, the participants are reduced to embrionic beings, poor pitiful beings, preparing for a new birth out of the womb of Mother Earth. Having prayed together, having suffered together for all creation, having been purified, new human beings emerge from the womb that is the lodge. They emerge as a community, a fellowship of those who can no longer harbor bad thoughts of one another, a fellowship bonded by a relationship of brotherhood or sisterhood, a fellowship rooted in a common bond to the land.

Contemporary Indian Painting as Art of the Land

Just as the symbolic value of land pervades American Indian mythology,

ancient village structures and modern ceremonies, so it also pervades contemporary painting. By contemporary painting I mean those Indian artists of the past century who have made the transistion from traditional Indian art forms of the past -- paintings on parflesches, tipi walls and medicine shields, for instance -- to the traditional western art forms, such as paintings on canvas framed in rectangles made of wood or metal. It is more than just a curiosity to note how few of these contemporary Indian painters have engaged in portraiture art and to note the dearth of landscape art in the Euro-American sense.

Instead of portraits, paintings of individuals tend to be anonymous typologies of mythological beings or funtionaries. Even the titles of these paintings would underscore this characteristic. Such, for instance, are the innumerable paintings titled "Medicine Man"[32]. None of these paintings is of a particular person, nor are they figure studies of individuals in the Euro-American sense. But they represent an attempt to capture the essence of a community's spirituality, its mythology. As such, all these types of paintings bring spatial, land images immediately to mind for Native viewers. In particular, the feathers, animal images and the like which adorn the medicine man have their mythological role in the harmony and balance of the cosmic whole, whose center is always in the particular place of a particular people.

Almost a corollary to the limited nature of portraiture in modern American Indian art is the total lack of landscape art. While aesthetics play an important part in all Indian art, there appears to be no interest in the land as merely a thing of beauty to be reproduced in such a fashion so as to be brought inside and lend its beauty there. When an Indian person looks out at the land, much more than beauty he or she sees life itself, the

source of all life. Hence in paintings which might possibly fit into someone's category of landscape art, mythological themes invariably take over. For instance, a 1982 painting by Delmar Boni (Apache) titled "Power and Strength of Silas John" begins as an abstract lanscape as one looks from the bottom up. But as one nears the top of a hill suddenly the sky is consumed and the painting is dominated by a mythological symbol that emerges out of the back of the hill, that is, out of the landscape, and suddenly functions to tie together land and Indian consciousness.

"Crossing the Yellowstone"(1975) by Earl Bliss (Crow) pictures a band of plains Indians on horseback crossing the river. The landscape and the human and animal figures are so abstracted as to give the impression that the band of Indians is emerging out of the earth from behind the river. One is left with the impression that it is difficult to distinguish between humans, horses and Mother Earth herself.

Conclusion

The primary art forms which we have discussed in this paper are mythology, architecture, and ceremony. All of these are thoroughly intertwined in the modern Indian consciousness. Today, over half of the American Indian population lives in the urban centers of North America. Over half have left the land that they still hold dear, even in absentia. Unemployment figures as high as 95% have driven them into the cities looking for work. Many of these people would still identify themselves as "traditional", and the vast majority look to one another for their sense of community in the concrete jungle. Any major city will have its Indian center, an Indian health clinic, an Indian child welfare program, the inevitable Indian alcohol rehabilitation program,

three or four Indian churches and a variety of other service agencies. And even in the city homage is paid to the sacredness of spatial relationships. It happens at the weekend pow-wow where families gather to dance, at social gatherings, at spiritual events, in the art that decorates the walls of Indian service agencies and in Indian homes, and in countless behavior patterns that continue to set American Indian people apart from others in North America's cities.

Notes

[1] G. Tinker, "Native Americans and the Land: The End of Living and the Beginning of Survival," Word and World 6 (Jan., 1986): 66-74. See also the persuasive argument of Vine DeLoria, Jr, God Is Red (New York: Dell, 1973), especially the chapters titled "Thinking in Time and Space" (pp. 75-90) and "The Spatial Problem of History" (pp. 129-150).

[2] This is a very complex issue in modern biblical scholarship. See Norman Perrrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); James Robinson, The New Quest for the Historical Jesus and Other Essays; E.P. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

[3] The Navajos have a different story, but the emergence is a common mythological theme for many tribes. See any of the general textbooks: Peggy V. Beck and A.L. Walters, The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life (Tsaile, AZ: Navajo Community College Press, 1977); Sam Gill, Native American Religions: An Introduction (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1982), pp. 16ff.

[4] God Is Red, p. 138.

[5] E.g., Virginia A. Armstrong, ed., I Have Spoken: American History Through the Voices of Indians (Chicago: Sage Books, 1971); Peter Nabokov, ed., Native American Testimony (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

[6] See, for instance, Dee Brown, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970).

[7] Ernest Thompson Seton, The Gospel of the Red Man: An Indian Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1936); Charles Eastman (Sioux), The Soul of the Indian: An Interpretation (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska, 1911, 1980).

8

Alfonso Ortiz and Richard Erdoes, edd., American Indian Myths and Legends (New York: Pantheon, 1984); Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin, American Indian Mythology (New York: Crowell, 1968); See their bibliographies for the more exhaustive collections from particular tribes.

9

Black Elk, with J.E. Brown, The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma, 1953); John Fire Lame Deer, with R. Erdoes, Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971).

10

John Joseph Matthews, The Osages: Children of the Middle Waters (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma, 1961).

11

For example, the legal claim of the Lakota Sioux to the Black Hills is being actively pursued legally and politically. See Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, The Great Sioux N;ation: Sitting in Judgement on America (American Indian Treaty Council Information Center, Moon Books, 1977); and Anita Parlow, ed., A Song From Sacred Mountain (Oglala Lakota Legal Rights Fund, 1983). Other examples are reported constantly in the Native press: See Akwasasne Notes (Mowhawk Nation, Rooseveltown, NY), America Before Columbus (National Indian Youth Council); or The Lakota Times.

12

Political examples of the backlash are increasing: e.g., "Proposition 456" in the state of Washington (passed in the 1984 general election); the Arizona state Republican party platform (also the 1984 election); and the so-called "equal rights for everybody" campaign in Wisconsin (an anti-treaty, anti-American Indian hunting rights movement that publishes bumper stickers such as: "Save a Deer, Shoot an Indian").

13

The difficulty in understanding Indian motives with respect to the land can be demonstrated anew in the most recent interpretation of American Indians by the famous Scandinavian anthropologist, A. Hultkranz, Belief and Worship in Native North America (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ., 1981).

Hultkranz reduces the American Indian value of creation/nature/land to a simple issue of economics. Vid. pp. 124f: "...the Indians have had a very diversified attitude to nature. I concur with Christopher Vecsey who maintains that they loved 'particular locations, particular aspects of their environment'. They did so partly because they were dependent on nature...and took advantage from the nourishing and protective resources that nature could supply. In the same way they tried to avoid all the dangers in nature, or what they supposed to be dangerous....the were so [ecologists] because a depletion of the wild or a destruction of the soil meant hunger and starvation in the Indian camp." See Vecsey, "American Indian Environmental Religions," in American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in Native American History, ed. Vecsey and Robert W. Venables (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ.: 1980).

14

This is not from the famous speech at the signing of the Treaty of Medicine Creek in 1854 but from a letter to President Franklin Pierce the following year.

15
The Tewa World:

16God Is Red.

17
Native American Religions: An Introduction; and Native American Traditions: Sources and Interpretations (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1983).

18
"An American Indian Model of the Universe," in John M. Carrol, ed., Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1956), originally published in the 1930's.

19
Above, fn. 1.

20
This nineteenth century, Penobscot version of the story is quoted from Ortiz and Erdoes, pp. 11-14. See also Charles Godfrey Leland, Algonquin Legends of New England (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884). With considerable variation, the story is common to peoples along the entire eastern part of North America.

21
Some of these tribes are Pimas, Jicarilla Apaches, Crows, Modocs and the various Pueblos. See James Mooney, "The Jicarilla Genesis," American Anthropologist 11 (1898): 197-200; Robert H. Lowie, The Crow Indians (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1935); C. Daryll Forde, Folklore, vol. 41 (London: Galisher, 1930); Ella Clark, Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest (1Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1953).

22
Sam Gill, Sacred Words: A Study of Navajo Religion and Prayer (Westport, CN: Greenwood, 1981), argues that there is no evidence that any version of the Navajo emergence story represents the emergence as a birth. But there are reasons for understanding the Navajo emergence at an implicit level as a birthing narrative, even if it is never quite explicitly articulated. The case could be argued without any reference by Navajos to the Earth as Mother; however, those references are common enough today and can be found on the lips of Frank Mitchell, the late Blessingway singer. See Frank Mitchell, Navajo Blessingway Singer, with C. J. Frisbie and D. P. McAllester, edd. (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona, 1978), pp. 202-204.

23
See Forde, pp.

24
Paul Radin, The Winnebago Tribe, 37th Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1915-1916 (Washington, D.C., 1923); E.W. Gifford, "Miwok Moieties," University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1916).

25
Claude Levy-Strauss, Structural Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

26
Levy-Strauss, "Social Structures of Eastern and Central Brazil," in Structural Anthropology, pp. 126f.

27
The Osages; See also, Wah'Kon-Tah: The Osage and the White Man's Road (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma, 1932) .

28

Much of the pan Indian spiritual renaissance is influenced by Lakota Sioux spirituality, for a variety of reasons. The Lakota ceremony is discussed by Black Elk, in The Sacred Pipe; by Lame Deer, in Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions, pp. 164-171; and in William Powers, Yuwipi (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska,)

29

Lame Deer, p. 100.

30

Lame Deer, p. 167.

31

Lame Deer, p. 167.

32

Two examples of "Medicine Man" paintings are by Donald Vann, Cherokee, (1973) and by Steven Mopope, Kiowa, (1955). Both are a part of the permanent collection at the Hurd Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. The collection includes numerous other examples portaiture is superceded by typology: "Sun Priest" (1968) by Al Momaday, Kiowa; "Oklahoma War Dancer" (1955) by Acee Blue Eagle, Creek/Pawnee; Plains Warrior with Eagle Feather Fan" (1981) by John Nito, Mescalero Apache, to name just a few. Paintings of women likewise tend to be types and not recognizable individuals. Such is the woman in a water color titled "Making Frybread" (1966) by Ruthe B. Jones, Delaware/Shawnee; and thetouching figure of a woman wrapped in a shawl standing on a hillock titled "Waiting" (1945) by Woodie Big Bow, Kiowa. In numerous other paintings one or another tribal ceremonial becomes the explicit subject matter, as in Julian Martinez' "Buffalo Dancers", San Ildefonso (1930); or Fred Kabuti's "Corn Dancers", Hopi (ca 1935).

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 4.4

"OUR COMMON FUTURE" - A CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES.

Gro Harlem Brundtland

Some 40 - 70 000 years ago, humankind, starting to use simple tools, took up its struggle with the biosphere. 200 years ago, with the advent of the industrial revolution, humankind gained the upper hand in that struggle.

In the first half of the 19th century, our advances in terms of power both over other people and over nature itself gained dynamic momentum. The growing global domination by the western world represents another hallmark of that period.

Since early times we have had the capacity to lay waste parts of our habitat. At the start of this century, however, neither human numbers nor human technology had the power to alter planetary systems radically. It was not until we gained access to vast energy resources and put them to use that we acquired the irrevocable power to destroy the biosphere. As this century draws to a closes, a greatly increased human population and its activities have that power, and major unintended changes are occurring in the biosphere.

As late as in 1944 we still did not believe that we in fact had the capacity to make this world inhabitable. Since Alamogordo, however, we may never again turn away from the fact that the challenge of controlling our tecnnical capability has become just as important as enhancing it.

Today we are becoming increasingly aware the relationship between development and environment is circular. Development

affects the environment, but development itself and the future of our species are dependent upon the environmental resource base. Many development trends have a devastating impact on environment. Such interactions clearly stand out as a major concern, as equally vital as the quest for security and disarmament.

In spite of the affluence and increasing well-being in many countries, the number of people living in absolute poverty is nearing 800 million. The unacceptable gap between the rich and the poor is widening every day. Under the present conditions of development, there is little hope that this gap will be bridged as it must. The need for change has become overwhelmingly obvious.

It is against this historical background I have the great honour to address this meeting in this rather peculiar ecclesiastical setting of Granavollen; the two "sister churches" bearing witness to the fact that Christianity has deep historic roots in Norway.

The term "sister churches" is also a fitting description of the growth of the international ecumenical movement in this century. Representing a major part of this movement which is called the World Council of Churches, you are indeed part of a rather unique international network. The churches' potential for reaching the grassroots is unsurpassed in many parts of the world.

It is my impression that the churches and the World Commission on Environment and Development today share an understanding that many have lost during the recent centuries of technological development. I have in mind the understanding of humankind's unquestionable interrelatedness with nature, or to use the ecclesiastical term, with creation.

It is my impression that Christian ethics recently have also tended to overlook the relation between human beings and

creation. The focus appears to have been concentrated more heavily on the relation between human beings and social structures.

Looking back we see of course Francis of Assisi with his medieval, but still far from outdated, understanding of humankind and nature. Perhaps there are traces of this Fransiscan tradition in the ongoing discovery that human beings and nature are dependent on one another.

Your work with these topics, "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" (JPIC), was initiated by the WCC 1983 Assembly in Vancouver, Canada. In that way you also reflect another part of that age-old knowledge that human beings and nature are one: that of the North American Indians, present at the Vancouver Assembly.

In recent years the present Bishop Per Lønning of Bjørgvin has contributed to this process. Until last year he headed a study on theology and ecology at the Lutheran World Federation's Institute of Ecumenical Research, in Strasbourg, France.

With this in mind, let us take a closer look at the present state of the relations between mankind and the earth. We remember the sixties, when global optimism about development prevailed. Growth rates were high in all countries. There were success stories from a number of newly independent states which had gained self-confidence as free nations, and made ambitious leaps to catch up with the industrialized countries economically .

At the end of that decade we saw the heavy impact of the first generation of severe pollution problems. The Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 was met with scepticism from many developing nations. What did the industrialized countries really mean? Was it yet another quest for luxury? Were we, in fact, trying to <u>slow</u> development in the interest of protecting exotic scenery and species? Was

conservation to be achieved at the expense of economic and social development in developing countries? Many of the environmental concerns of the industrialized nations seemed far removed from most of humanity's preoccupation with basic living standards and, in some cases, with survival itself.

In the seventies, we witnessed discussions on the question of actual limits to growth. During that period, North and South seemed to be fighting completely different battles. Frustrations about the inability of our institutions to deal effectively with the most crucial issues were growing. The international conferences on water supply, food, women, human settlements, new and renewable energy sources, and population, offered hope of improved cooperation on major issues. Yet a sense of frustration prevailed. The world was growing smaller, but the gaps between people seemed to be widening.

This was the situation in 1983, when the General Assembly of the United Nations gave the World Commission on Environment and Development its ambitious task. We were asked to take a fresh look at the interrelated issues and to formulate concrete recommendations for action based on shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues.

Our report - "Our Common Future" - is a political document that covers the whole global political agenda. It carries the consensus signature of Commissioners from 21 countries, most of whom come from developing countries. The Commission comprised people with broad experience, not only from environment and development, but also from many vital areas of decision-making which influence economic and social progress. They enriched our deliberations with their cultures, values and ethics. That is why I dare to say that our political consensus rests on a common global cultural denominator.

I shall not repeat the painful list of environmental disasters and grim statistics which have alerted us to the grave crisis facing our planet here. Suffice it to remind us that the atmosphere is a fragile, closed system, not a limitless garbage

disposal for by-products of industrialization. Global heating and the threat of climatic change must be countered in a joint determined effort as regards the risks of rising sea-levels and ensuing severe impacts on food-production and settlement patterns. Acidification, hitherto a disease of the rich countries, is also making its impact felt in many newly industrialized areas in the developing world. The loss of tropical rain forests, which continues at an alarming rate, threatens vast numbers of living species and affects the global climate. Over 11 million hectares of forest are destroyed yearly. 6 million hectares of productive dryland are turned into worthless desert each year. Soil erosion is regarded as problem No. 1 by the Food and Agricultural Organization.

Our report sounds an urgent message of warning. We found that present trends and policies cannot continue. They will destroy the resource base on which we all depend.
Presently there are few signs that we are about to win our battle against poverty, which continues to tie hundreds of millions to an existence which cannot be reconciled with human dignity and the need for solidarity. We also found that there can be no question of environment versus development. Environmental degradation and the unequal distribution of wealth and power are in reality different aspects of the same set of problems.

Our second and equally important message is one of hope and optimism. We believe, very strongly, that changes not only are necessary - but they are also possible. Humanity has the knowledge, technology, ingenuity and resources. If we use them correctly, we can adjust the course of development so that it enhances the resource base rather than degrades it. Never before in our history have we had similar capabilities. But for the necessary decisions to be made, we need a new vision, and a stronger political will and determination. We need a new global system of ethics - practical ethics - which can transcend governments, non-governmental organizations, scientific communities, financial institutions, and trade unions, as well as human thinking and behaviour.

Almost ten years ago, as Minister of Environment, I gave a lecture headed "New consideration". It has been interesting to reread what I said on that occasion, including the following cri de coeur:

> "The lack of insight into and thus of recognition of the fundamental interconnections between natural processes and social activities may in the future be a serious obstacle to the innovative thinking we shall need if we are to meet the challenges confronting us. The main problem will be to arrive at a planning and decision-making process, a form of society, which takes better account of these considerations. This is true not least in our present economic situation, where we must be especially on guard against the real danger that short-term economic considerations will be advanced at the expense of more fundamental and long-term human needs.

That was in 1978. Today, noone can claim that we lack insight into the interconnections I mentioned then. They are a fact, and they are making us aware that we must plot a new course.

Our main objective is to create such a complete awareness that we can move forward from a phase in which we merely repair damage to a decision-making process in which environmental concerns are integrated into every issue. That objective calls for determined and systematic effort. The goal is distant, but there can be no doubt about which direction we must take.

Our aim was to arrive at viable fundamental principles for the national and international administration of natural resources. Our main message concerns the need to achieve sustainable development.

Sustainable development rests on three main foundations: ecology, economy, and shared responsibility.

If all three pillars are not equally solidly built, the whole platform may collapse.

One of the Commission's main recommendations is that economic and social planning make much greater use of our knowledge of ecology and of the limits nature sets to our exploitation. Ecological and economic facts must be coordinated in effective instruments with which to control long-term national and international developments. Up to now, environmental protection has always been regarded as a special interest, which central economic and industrial decision-makers have not been overly concerned with. Environmental considerations have in far too many cases been looked upon as spanners in otherwise efficient development works. All too frequently, economists and ecologists apply utterly different time-scales in their thinking. There are difficult challenges here to the following up of the Commission's recommendations. Short-term perspectives and sustainable development are not easily combined. Economic yardsticks such as whether Gross National Income is increasing are completely inadequate as indicators of whether or not development is sustainable. In order to set our course towards sustainable development, we must develop better ways of measuring natural resources and the state of the environment, and of gauging trends also in <u>these</u> fields.

For the poorest countries, it is absolutely essential to be given an opportunity to develop on the basis of their own resources. As things are, they are far too dependent on selling their raw materials to industrialized countries - at very low prices. The fact that the poorest countries are being forced to produce crops for export instead of food crops, on increasingly marginal land, to provide the foreign currency they so desperately need, is also completely out of harmony with the concept of sustainable development.

Though our chief aims go beyond merely meeting the primary needs of the world's poorest people, it is the pillar of solidarity beneath the sustainable development platform which is likely to cause most concern in the immediate future. It seems

to be extremely difficult to convey the message that cracks in this pillar will have harmful consequences extending far beyond the poorest countries themselves. Poverty and lack of solidarity are contributory causes to desertification, deforestation, loss of genetic resources, and climatic change. Unless there are drastic reforms of the world economy, trade, and international aid, all these serious problems will rapidly grow much worse in the years to come.

The Commission found that economic growth is essential to sustainable development. It is essential if we are to overcome poverty. And it is necessary to creating the capacity to solve environmental problems. But the nature of that growth will have to satisfy new criteria. No doubt this central argument is an important reason why the Commission has been listened to in much wider circles than those which would normally have taken an interest in a traditional environmental report.

During the 1984-85 African famine, the British aid organization OXFAM stated that "It is not the lack of rain which is the problem for the people of Sahel, but the lack of justice". We know that this applies both between industrialized and developing countries, and in most developing countries.

Among the major problems most urgently in need of solving is the debt crisis. For the poorest countries, especially in Africa, there appears to be no alternative to relatively rapid and systematic debt cancellation if production is to be built up and patterns of production changed. It will also be of fundamental importance to find ways of controlling interest rates and achieving stable exchange rates. Particularly for the Latin American countries with the heaviest debt burdens, these questions will determine their ability to go on servicing their debts. That is one more reason why it is necessary to ensure growth in the world economy, as well as cooperation between all concerned to reduce the burden of debt by more direct means.

what is at risk is nature's productive capacity and human lives and health.

Genetic resources

The protection of plants and animals has often been regarded as an obstacle to development, as academic museum activity for tender-hearted people with too much leisure. tender And so it may be for some - but that is not the question here. What we are concerned with is the preservation of the genetic resources on which our lives are based. They are the real non-renewable resources. However clever we may become at biotechnology or gene splicing, genetic materials once lost are gone forever. The Commission accordingly stressed this in its report.

We need not achieve everything at once

To sceptics, of whom there are always plenty, I would say that no one has claimed that we can solve all the problems at once. A counsel of perfection should not blind us to what can be achieved. Nor should the want of omnipotence be reason to abstain from such options as are available.

If we are to reach the goals of sustainable development, virtually every one of the challenges I have referred to must be dealt with through both national and international efforts.

The various agencies of the United Nations will be playing central parts in the work of following up the report. To facilitate coordinations among the UN agencies, the Norwegian Government, following consultations with the Secretary General of the United Nations and with his cooperation, has decided to invite the Heads of many important agencies to a special conference in Norway in July.

Other international organizations can also help to prevent the World Commission's report from gathering dust in bureaucratic

target sectors will be to make energy consumption more efficient, and to develop new renewable sources. We in the industrialized countries must strive to stabilize our energy consumption. Large-scale research in renewable energy and the transfer of technology to developing countries are both imperative.

Challenges to industry

Industry has a key part to play in the developments which lie ahead. Creating awareness of industry's role in relation to development will therefore be of tremendous importance, and industry must itself define its responsibility clearly. We have seen industry assume this kind of responsibility often before. I have already mentioned a number of sectors in which industry is mobilizing efforts to develop new technology. Let no one be in the slightest doubt about the growing necessity of developing environmentally acceptable technologies.

The transfer of technology to developing countries is also a big challenge today. Moving chemical industries to low-cost, "flag of convenience" countries lacking environmental standards and control systems is certainly not going to lead to sustainable global development. The welcome given to that type of industry by the governments of some developing countries is not making the problem any easierto solve. They are up against real dilemmas in their wish to exploit their environments to gain competitive advantages. The argument that "we also want to take part in the development of industrialized and welfare societies, even if it does cost a little" will not do in a long term perspective. Admittedly it is the industrialized countries which produce 98% of the roughly 375 million tons of today's dangerous industrial waste, so that distributing production among more countries may in itself seem sensible. But the recovery, control and safe storage of such waste must satisfy the same strict requirements wherever it is produced. In the last analysis,

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what is at risk is nature's productive capacity and human lives and health.

Genetic resources

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archives. Many important NGOs will be in the forefront of a broad supporting campaign.

The role of NGOs is central. The Commission is itself an NGO. Though coming from many different nations and diciplines and bearing different national and international responsibilities, the commissioners hammered out over three years a unanimous document. It is evident how closely our findings match the vision of many of the world's NGOs, both the ones traditionally concerned with environment and development, and the ones who primarily have another foundation.

Our report does not lay direct blame at the door of any government and institution. It has been criticized for not naming names. We are confident that that is a job we may leave to the world's NGOs.

This leads me to another important role of the NGOs. One of the main themes of our report is that sustainable development cannot be achieved without a political system that secures citizen's effective participation in decision-making. NGOs are essential for this fundamental process. Thus we have called upon governments to recognize and extend NGOs' right to know and to have access to information. It is a hall-mark of mature democracy that they be consulted and participate in decisions about activities that have an effect on their environment.

In the report we stress the need for basic education. Education should be geared towards making people more capable of dealing with local environmental problems as well as towards raising their understanding about the interdependence between the environment and development. The churches are deeply involved with the education of future generations all over the world. You have the opportunity to provide direction and motivation in forming values about our common responsibility for the environment and for social justice. I hope that "Our Common Future" could provide substance and inspiration, both when you

in your teachers' training, and when you when you consider the curricula of your schools.

Public concern puts environment and development issues onto the national and international agendas. NGOs have helped to create awareness and to communicate the growing concern over environment and development issues to decision-makers.

The World Council of Churches is also an NGO. Your objective is the future of humankind, a common future, and it is tempting to say, our common future. It trancends the the gospel that there is hope, and that we have been given a responsibility to manage and care for each other and for the earth.

In relation to environment and development issues the churches has the power to influence our motives, and ultimately our actions. Your values are eternal, but they can be applied to current human and political challenges. What could be more becoming of the churches than to show ethical leadership and work for sustainable development also at the practical level.

So what is the WCED's challenge to the churches? First and foremost: help us convince all those who fear the future that there is hope. We do not have to head towards imminent ecological disaster. We can find another path, that of a healthy and sustainable common future.

The Christian faith holds a basic hope. This hope concerns not only the churches, but the earth and humankind as a whole. We can join hands for "Our Common Future".

The follow-up work will require untraditional thinking. This is a time to try to deepen our understanding of the changes taking place, to look ahead, and to assess what needs to be done if we are to stay in control of our own future. Developments in science and social organization are altering the world profoundly

- too profoundly for conventional habits of thinking to grasp. History suggests that mankind rarely understands revolutionary changes at the time it is coming about. Today's and tomorrow's revolutionary changes are characterized by their great magnitude and speed. Their impact is both centrifugal and centripetal, dispersing, yet at the same time concentrating activities, influences and decisions.

If we do not succeed in reaching the hearts and minds of people, young and old, in this period of change, our chances in the future will be less. Voluntary organizations, industry, trade unions, and research environments are called upon to play essential roles in this process. Women will have to have much more of a hearing, not only because of their roles in practical natural husbandry, especially in developing countries, but also because of their influence both on product selection and on local environments.

The World Commission's report can - and should - have great consequences. We can not allow the threats and warnings, or the optimistic ventures that will be needed to alter developments, to be forgotten. Politicians and scientists, the commercial sector and the voluntary organizations: all share a common responsibility. This subject should engage this audience, too, with its perspectives, possibilities, traditions and great influence.

Gran, 17. 2. 1988

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 4.5

WCC MESSAGE FOR WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

This year, World Environment Day falls on a Sunday. It is, therefore, particularly appropriate for Christians to recall that the whole of creation is within God's provenance and that we are responsible for its well being.

People in some places are fortunate in that they enjoy a relatively healthy and unpolluted environment. Tragically, in recent years, such situations have often abruptly changed for the worse. Elsewhere, environmental degradation has reached such appalling levels that only most drastic measures are likely to avert global catastrophe. In such a case, all of us - the environmentally well off and the disadvantaged majority - would suffer irreversibly.

On World Environment Day, therefore, let us call on the whole human family to strive for the preservation and restoration of the natural environment - especially the world's animals and plants - interrelated with each other and with us.

Let us recognise that this can only be done by awakening communities and nations to seek justice and peace for all. They must also adopt policies and life-styles which model our responsibilities under God towards our human neighbours, all our fellow creatures, and the whole of creation.

At this time, we are particularly concerned at the manner in which irreplaceable and rapidly diminishing genetic resources are being destroyed as a result of massive deforestation. We are especially concerned also about laboratory experiments now being conducted which involve transmutations and the formation of new genetic strains.

These threaten the delicate and mutually supportive relationships between different life forms, and introduce, for the first time in human history, the possibility of a biological catastrophe of global dimensions. We call upon all scientists involved in genetic experimentation, their organisations and governments, to reconsider the scope and aims of such research until such time as there has been adequate public discussion of these issues.

Christians believe God sent the Son to save the whole of creation. We believe God nourishes and loves all living creatures - people, animals, and plants - and the universe itself. We believe the perfection of creation must be achieved through our active participation in the costly realisation of our common future.

Nonetheless, we affirm the centrality of Christ as 'the first-born of all creation' in whom 'all things hold together' (Colossians 1:15-17). Therefore, there may be limits within which artificial life forms must be kept if we are not to forfeit our legitimate role as co-creators with God.

Let us, therefore, rededicate ourselves, praying that we become better equipped to fulfil God's purposes in partnership with God, and joining hands with our brothers and sisters everywhere in the struggle to affirm in word and deed the integrity of God's unique and wonderful creation. [EPS]

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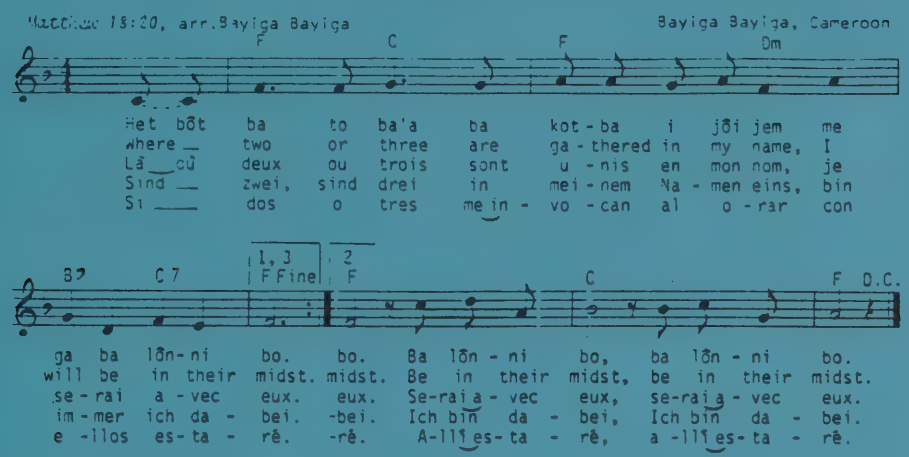
JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 4.6

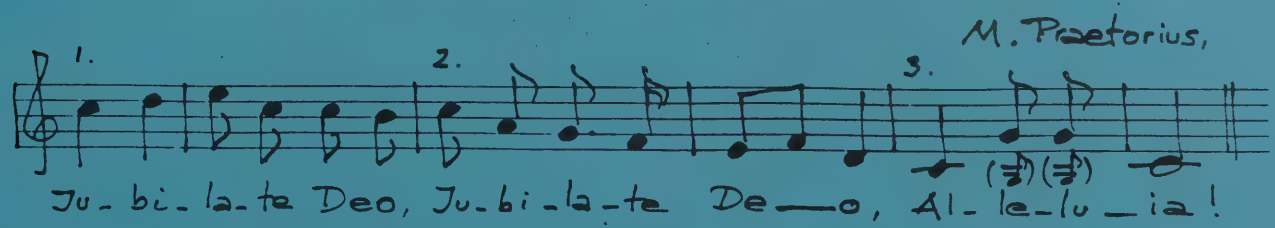
GATHERING / CALL TO WORSHIP Psalm 100

SONG "Het bôt ba to ba'a (Where two or three)



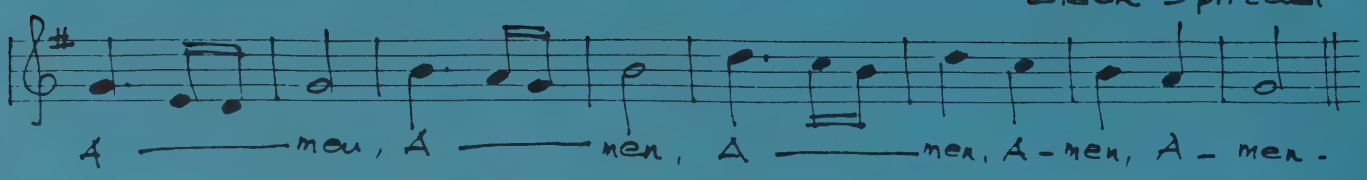
ACT OF PRAISE Psalm 24 (Responsorial)

- To God belong the earth and all it contains,
  THE WORLD AND ALL WHO LIVE THERE;
- It is he who laid its foundations on the seas,
  ON THE FLOWING WATERS FIXED IT FIRM.
- Who shall go up to the mountain of God?
  WHO SHALL TAKE A STAND IN HIS HOLY PLACE?
- The clean of hands and pure of heart,
  whose heart is not set on vanities,
  WHO DOES NOT SWEAR AN OATH IN ORDER TO DECEIVE.
- Such a one will receive blessing from God,
  SAVING JUSTICE FROM THE GOD OF HIS SALVATION.
- Such is the the people that seeks God,
  THAT SEEKS YOUR PRESENCE, GOD OF OUR PARENTS.



PRAYERS OF INVOCATION

Black Spiritual



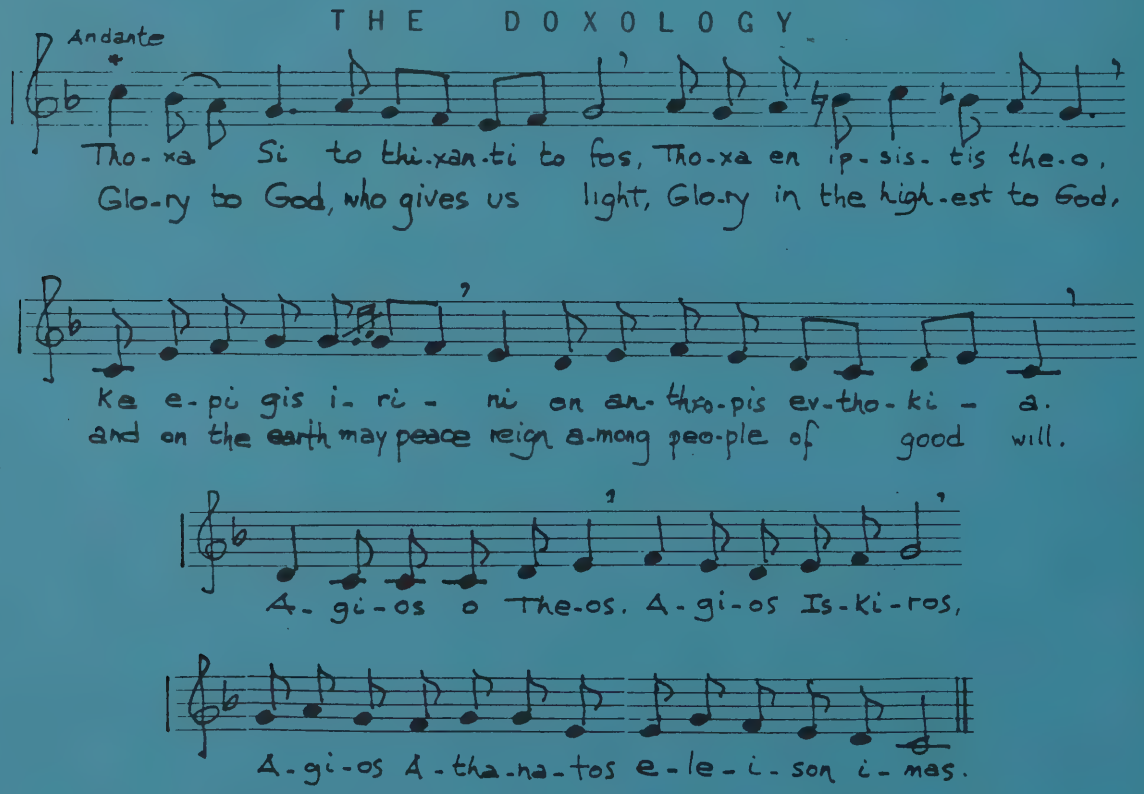
READING OF THE SCRIPTURES

Old Testament (Genesis 2:8,15): God planted a garden in Eden, which is in the East, and there he put the man he had fashioned. From the soil, God caused to grow every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ... God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and take care of it.

Epistle (Romans 8:18-23): In my estimation, all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us, for the whole of creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of Go to be revealed. It was not for its own purposes that creation had frustration imposed on it, but for the purposes of him who imposed it, with the intention that the whole creation itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God. We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains. And not only that: we too, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL (Matthew 6:25-34)

THE DOXOLOGY



* Basses articulate text on note C (Do), sustained throughout.

Greek Orthodox Liturgy
As sung by Fr. C. Isotsis

READING OF THE GOSPEL (and of key verse -"the Kingdom and its justice"- in several languages) Sing "Agios o Theos..." after each one.

SILENT MEDITATION

LITANY OF CONFESSION - "The Sorrow of the Earth"

Leader: In most aboriginal cultures of the Americas, the earth is called "Mother", as she is a source of blessings -food, clothing, shelter, medicines, beauty... God, the Creator and source of life, is called Great Spirit. Mother Earth speaks:

Voice: Listen, my children. The Spirit who moved over the dry land is not pleased. I am thirsty. Are you listening?

All: We are listening, Mother Earth. Speak.

Voice: The Spirit who filled the waters is not pleased. I choke with debris and pollution. Are you listening?

All: We are listening Mother Earth. Speak.

Voice: The Spirit who brought beauty to the earth is not pleased. I grow uglier everyday with misuse. Are you listening?

All: We are listening, Mother Earth. Speak.

Voice: The Spirit who brought forth all the creatures of this earth is not pleased. My creatures are being destroyed. Are you listening?

All: We are listening, Mother Earth. Speak.

Voice: The Spirit who gave humans life,and a path to walk together is not pleased. You are losing your humanity and your footsteps stray from the path, lead by injustice. Are you listening?

All: We are listening, Mother Earth. We are listening.

Leader: O God, you created the earth in goodness and in beauty. Forgive all that we have done to harm the earth.

All: God, have mercy.

Leader: O God, you have filled the earth with food for our sustenance. Forgive us for not sharing the gifts of the earth.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You have created us, o God, of one blood throughout the earth. Forgive us for not living as sisters and brothers should.

All: God, have mercy.

Sister Mary Rosita Shiosee,SB

Ulises Torres, Chile — Chilean folk melody

C G C

1. A ti, Se - ñor, te pe - di - mos per - dón en es - te mo - men - to
1. O Lord, have mer - cy up - on us! O Lord have mer - cy up - on us!
1. Wir kom - men, Herr, und wir bit - ten: Gib jetzt uns dei - ne Ver - ge - bung!

F C G C

por los pe - ca - dos de ac - cio - nes, pa - la - bras y pen - sa - mien - tos.
For - give the wrong we are do - ing, our words and thoughts that of - fend you.
Ver - ge - bung für uns - re Ta - ten, für Wor - te und für Ge - dan - ken.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Korea

Chu - yo chu - yo tu - ro chu - so - so
(Lord, Lord, Hear us.)

Chu - yo chu - yo tu - ro chu - so - so

OUR FATHER (In your own language)

SONG "Cherchez d'abord le royaume de Dieu"

Adaptation française JEM — KAREN LAFFERTY

Ré Fa♯m Sol Ré

1. Cher - chez d'a - bord le roy - au - me de Dieu,

Al - lé - lu - ia.

Sol Ré La La7

et sa jus - ti - ce;

Al - lé - lu - ia.

Ré Fa♯m Sol Ré

et toutes ces choses vous se - ront don - nées en plus.

Al - lé - lu - ia.

Sol Ré La7 Ré

Al - lé - lu, Al - lé - lu - ia!

Al - lé - lu - ia!

MEDITATION

This life, therefore, is not righteousness but growth in righteousness
not health but healing;
not being but becoming;
not rest but exercise.
We are not yet what we shall be but we are growing towards it.
The process is not yet finished, but it is going on.
This is not the end, but it is the road.
All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.

Martin Luther

THE BLESSING

Lebanon

Sa - la - mun, Sa - la - mun, Sa - la - mun Kulla - heen! (Peace be with you!)

The Integrity of Creation. (*)
A special issue of 'Women in a Changing World', a publication of the WCC's Sub-unit on 'Women in Church and Society'.
WCC, Geneva, June 1988, 32 p.

Integrity of Creation. (*)
An Ecumenical Discussion. The intention of this document is to engage churches, Christian groups and all people who are concerned about the integrity of creation in a process of study and action.
JPIC, Granvollen, Norway, 25 February to 3 March, 1988.

The Search for a Christian Understanding of Health, Healing and Wholeness. (*)
A summary report on the study programme of the Christian Medical Commission of the World Council of Churches, 1976-1982.
WCC, Geneva, 1982, 26 p.

Orthodox Perspectives on Creation. (*)
Report of the Inter-Orthodox Consultation held in Sofia, Bulgaria, 24 October - 2 November 1987. 12 p.

The Doctrine of Creation and its Integrity - A Challenge to the Responsibility of Christianity today
Report of the meeting of the World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, Porto Alegre/Brazil, 13-20 November 1987. 9 p.

Experiencing oneness - Caring for all (*)
Towards an ecumenical theology of creation. Workshop on Integrity of Creation, World Council of Churches Sub-unit on Women in Church and Society, December 1987. 20 p.

The Wholeness of Creation in Ecumenical Perspective. (*)
A Documentary survey + Bibliography. WCC, 1987, 11 p.

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.
A special issue of 'The Ecumenical Review', Vol.38, No. 3, WCC, Geneva, July 1986.

Covenanting for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.(*)
An ecumenical survey by D. Preman Niles. In 'The Ecumenical Review', Vol. 39 No. 4, p. 470-484. WCC, Geneva, October 1987.

From One Earth to One World
An overview by the World Commission on Environment and Development. Oxford University Press, New York, 1987.

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Washington, D.C. 20540
Cataloging Source
www.loc.gov/cataloging

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 4.7

THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Recommended Reading

The following titles are only a limited choice from the vast amount of studies, articles, etc. written on "The Integrity of Creation". Copies of the titles marked (*) may be obtained from the WCC Documentation Service, which can also help you identify other materials on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Please, write to:

WCC Documentation Service
P.O.Box No. 66
1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland

Faith and Science in an unjust World.

Report of the World Council of Churches's Conference on 'Faith, Science and the Future', Massachusetts Institute of Thecnology, Cambridge, USA, 12-124 July 1979.
Volume 1: Plenary Presentations, 392 p.
Volume 2: Reports and Recommendations, 214 p.

1980, WCC, Geneva.

Church and Society Publications; WCC:

Report and Background Papers.
Meeting of the Working Group, Glion, Switzerland, September 1987, 240 p.

God, Humanity and Nature in Relation to Justice and Peace.(*)
By J.N.K. Mugambi
Church and Society Documents, September 1987, 70 p.

Reintegrating God's Creation. (*)
A Paper for Discussion.
Church and Society Documents, September 1987, 62 p.

Science and the Theology of Creation (*)
A Bossey Seminar.
Church and Society Documents, August 1988, 56 p.

Cfr. also: Church and Society Newsletters, passim.

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JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Resource Materials 4.8

JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION (JPIC)

Progress Report: A REGIONAL OVERVIEW

I. INTRODUCTION

"Humankind is currently in a crisis, the catastrophic climax of which probably still lies ahead... "So said physicist and lay theologian Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker at a JPIC consultation in Glion, Switzerland, in 1987. During seven days of discussion, none of the participants challenged von Weizsäcker's analysis; in paper after paper there was little else than straightforward and sometimes devastating confirmation of the developing crisis. Indeed, even nature somehow contrived to present its evidence of the critical state of our civilization: part-way through that consultation, chemical plants at nearby Basel accidentally spilled tons of deadly chemicals into the Rhine River, killing millions of fish and polluting the drinking water of numerous European towns and cities.

The Glion consultation confirmed and sharpened what the participants at the Vancouver Assembly had reported in 1983. That Assembly provided a litany of testimony pointing to a world imperilled and "in a state of emergency": massive and increasing human rights violations, including torture, imprisonments, detentions, rapes, disappearances and assassinations; widespread oppression; the worldwide resurgence of racism and the continuing pervasiveness of sexism and ageism; Unconscionable numbers of homeless people --refugees, exiles, addicts, run-away youth and street people; hunger and starvation; the haunting spectre of nuclear war which dramatizes the world's unsociability; the arrogance of humanity's 'mastery' over creation which 'groans' under the travail to which it is being subjected--deforestation, acid rain, soil erosion, destruction of plant and animal life; frightening technological developments in genetics and bio-chemistry; ideological conflicts (wars) between and within nation-states; the widening gap between rich and poor peoples and nations. The conclusion drawn from this testimony is obvious: the world is fragmented, torn asunder, seemingly hopelessly divided against itself, East and West, North and South, both within and among nations and between humanity and creation, and these divisions appear so irreparable, so massively supported by entrenched structures and ideologies, so anchored in long histories of tyranny, corruption and self-righteousness that it scarcely seems possible the world might one day bridge the chasm and find its way towards justice, peace and a renewed creation.

The Vancouver Assembly faced this testimonay head-on, well knowing that Christian hope must confront the data of despair. Moreover, it welcomed reports that "the poor, the oppressed and the discriminated peoples are awakening everywhere to resist unjust powers and to forge their own destinies ... the peoples of the world are coming to their feet in growing number, demanding justice, crying out for peace ... This is a sign of life. "Such signs of life have their source in "Jesus Christ--the life of the world", which was the theme of the Vancouver Assembly. The Assembly called the churches to "confess anew their faith in Jesus Christ ... as Saviour and Lord", to claim in hope the biblical and eschatological vision of peace with justice, and to participate through the power of the risen Christ in the struggle for a renewed humanity and creation. The Assembly recognized that the churches' participation in this struggle would take different forms according to varying traditions, contexts and needs. It asserted, however, that the churches' witness was not an option; it was an imperative of the risen Lord. To that end the Assembly mandated that the WCC "engage member churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of creation."

II. A VARIETY OF APPROACHES--COMMON ELEMENTS

Five years have elapsed since the Vancouver Assembly invited Christians to participate together in the struggle against the threats to life in our world. During this period the WCC has established an office to promote and coordinate the JPIC process among the member churches.

The following is not intended as a complete reporting of the responses of Christians and churches to the Vancouver call. Indeed, in most cases the courageous and sometimes heroic actions of Christians against the forces of death are neither known nor recorded. This report is therefore limited to documents and sources available in the JPIC and other WCC offices in Geneva. This documentation highlights several relevant points:

First, it is important to note that Christians and churches worldwide are indeed involved in the struggle against the forces of injustice and death. This action is taking various forms according to the context and nature of the threats. In some countries the struggle is explicitly and consciously related to the JPIC conciliar process, while in other countries the churches are consumed by and focused on their own concrete and often oppressive situations. In each case, however, the churches' witness and action provides an alternative to the established order on the issues of justice, peace and creation. Although this takes various forms, it is clear that the 'subversive' Kingdom vision that Christ introduced and lived out in His world is a minority presence in our twentieth century world as well.

Second, in Europe and North America, the churches' previous concentration on nuclear issues is expanding to include study on the interconnectedness between nuclear deterrence, global injustice--including the international debt and economic justice--and our despoiled creation. Moreover, the churches on these continents are prophetically speaking out on domestic issues--racism, unemployment, social services and health care, the problems of 'quest workers' and asylum seekers, economic injustice, military budgets--and are pointing out how these domestic issues are global and interrelated.

Third, among the churches in developing countries there is widespread resistance to oppression. Political and economic liberation is a central concern in these countries where the people have lived for so long under various forms of domination and oppression--racist, sexist, capitalist. In many cases the churches have become involved in this struggle for liberation. In this struggle they also 'discover' and are empowered by the liberating force of the Gospel. This occurs most frequently among the base Christian communities where the Gospel is being read and enacted in bold and fresh ways --in resistance and protest, in dance and celebration, in suffering and hope. Four, the issue of the role and rights of women in church and society is (finally) being addressed throughout the Christian world. This is not happening without struggle, however, and in most places discrimination, prejudice, abuse and oppression of women remain. However, the emergence of "feminist theology", the presence of women in leadership roles in church, government and industry, the growing awareness (through the media and other means) of the abuse of women is opening doors towards the Gospel vision that in Christ there is "neither male nor female", that all are one in Him.

There have been several regional consultations and more are planned for women on JPIC issues. These highlight in a far more focussed way the concerns of women in the struggle for JPIC.

The concept of integrity of creation which is the least known of the three concepts in JPIC, is beginning to receive increased attention. Of particular importance in this area are the Orthodox Consultation on the subject which was held in Sofia, Bulgaria, in September 87 and the Integrity Consultation in Granvollen, Norway, Febr. 25 - March 4, 1988.

Finally, there is a growing awareness that the churches must work together in the common struggle against the threats to life in our world. Indeed, as the churches work together they are discovering that denominational barriers are only relatively important. This is true in the base communities, for example, where religious or denominational differences are of no importance when compared to the common struggle. But this is also true among churches in affluent countries where ecumenical solidarity is transcending denominational lines, including that between Protestants and Roman Catholics, as the churches work together on the issue of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

III. DIFFERENT FORMS OF STRUGGLING FOR JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

1. Africa

Southern Africa: The Vancouver Assembly stated that "institutionalized racism in South Africa continues to be the central problem of justice and peace in the region." Moreover, it reaffirmed that "racism is a sin against God and against fellow human beings" and called "on the member churches to intensify their witness against apartheid and the continuing oppression in South Africa and Namibia." Two years later, world church leaders committed themselves to the implementation of the "Harare Declaration". Subsequently, in May 1987, about 225 delegates and representatives of churches, non-governmental organizations and liberation movements met in Lusaka, Zambia, to discuss "The Churches' Search for Justice and Peace in Southern Africa". The meeting was

especially significant because of the discussions with the liberation movements of Southern Africa. Among other things, the delegates concluded the following: "We affirm the unquestionable right of the people of Namibia and South Africa to secure justice and peace through the liberation movements." Addressing the delicate question of using violence, the participants said: "While remaining committed to peaceful change, we recognize that the nature of the South African régime, which wages war against its own inhabitants and neighbours, compels the movements to the use of force along with other means to end oppression." The delegates underlined "the overwhelming material sacrifice and suffering of the Frontline States in combating apartheid and the destabilizing influence of the Pretoria régime in the region." Most recently, (in April 1988) sixty representatives from member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) met in Gaborone, Botswana, in response to the South African government's policy of destabilization among the Frontline States in Southern Africa. The delegates issued a strong statement against the South African government, pledged themselves to the struggle for liberation and agreed to open an office in Botswana in 1989. The coordination of this office will increase communication between and among churches and develop seminars on liberation theology within the churches in the region.

A crucial issue for the entire continent of Africa is the relationship of the churches to the existing socio-political realities. In post-independent Africa, the phenomenon of dictatorships and military régimes has increased, causing violence, destruction of property and gross human rights violations, all in the name of "national security". Extreme poverty among the masses coexists, with great wealth held by a small élite. Conflicts between and among tribal groups are constant and costly, and there are also battles between Christians and Muslims and even among Christian denominations. In addition, the governments are heavily militarized, and there is an ever-increasing amount of money spent for arms production and arms import. In many areas deforestation and plundering of nature are used as means to balance the budgets. The ethical problems resulting from these realities have not yet been solved. However, the churches are consciously confronting the ethical implications of the role of the military, of the concept of national security and the violation of human rights.

Moreover, in the face of the present unsettling situation, the churches are engaging themselves more and more in politics, working to become the conscience of society. The churches have taken the lead in ministering to the millions of refugees and exiles on the continent. Both the Christian Council and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ghana courageously defended human dignity and the fundamental human rights during the early days of the present régime. In Zambia the Christian Council challenged the government by insisting on unity, reconciliation and peace in a country torn apart by tribal conflicts. In Uganda the Catholic bishops issued a pastoral letter in 1986 declaring: "In the years since independence many of our dreams and hopes have not been fulfilled. Rather, we have witnessed a growth of exploitation, corruption, robbery, violence, tribal strife and hatred." Stressing the dignity of each human person, the document addressed the key issues towards rebuilding the nation: justice, peace and unity.

In the conflicts between Islamic and Christian communities in Nigeria and Sudan, situations often exploited by the governments, the churches are taking a firm stand in favour of peace and reconciliation as the only solution. Two regional meetings on JPIC were held in 1987, one in Uganda and the other in

Bangui for Central Africa. On both occasions the participants discovered that they were confronted by the same problems and the same challenges in the areas of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. They created JPIC networks to promote cooperation among the churches involved in their common struggles.

2. Asia

The Christian Conference of Asia considers its first priority the coordination of the churches' struggles for justice and peace. It has scheduled a major conference for 1989 on the topic, "The Mission of God in the Context of Suffering and Struggling People in Asia". At a meeting in Singapore, March 1987, the delegates declared the option for people who suffer and struggle for justice and freedom as an imperative for Christians. In the Asian view, the JPIC process is a reformulation of the former WCC programme for a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society. It is for such a society that the ochlos (the marginalized and oppressed) and the ethne (the people in reference to their national and ethnic origin) are struggling.

Many Asian countries are caught up in the global military strategies of the superpowers. The struggle against militarism is therefore a major concern of peacemaking. The second priority is the aspiration of the people for justice and greater harmony. The struggles in this area are against the enormous economic disparities, discrimination, extreme poverty and the lack of participation in decision-making processes. It is the unjust and exploitative systems throughout Asia that in the long term have to be changed.

The realities, and hence the struggles, differ from country to country. Because of the particular commitment of the churches, three countries should be especially noted. Although the Christian community in Japan makes up only 1 per cent of the population, it has been influential in supporting the people's movement to maintain the non-military-power policy as formulated in the country's Constitution of 1947. The struggle against the annual budget increase for arms production is another priority. The main focus of the battle of the Christian community concerns the discrimination of the almost 1 million Koreans who live as exiles in the country. The finger-print system, to which all foreigners are subject in order to receive an alien registration card, is viewed not only as an administrative but also as a discriminatory measure; it provokes feelings of inferiority among the Koreans and characterizes them as "potential criminals". The Christian community is fighting this system, convinced that it is an offence to human dignity and contrary to the Gospel.

The Christian community in South Korea has made the struggle against the "unwanted" division between the northern and the southern parts of the country its major priority. The armistice line of 1953, which soon became a dividing wall, has artificially created two peoples alienated from one another. Through the help of CCIA/WCC, Korean Christians of the South and the North have met each other after more than thirty years. Both the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) have also been actively involved in this programme of unification. Moreover, the NCC in (South) Korea has recently proposed to its government concrete measures to promote the process towards reconciliation and reunification. In April 1988, delegates at the International Christian Consultation on Justice and Peace in Korea stated: "Division has been justified by state authorities in both North and South Korea in the name of national security... The dominant ideology of anti-communism has strengthened the hand of the powerful and the privileged. The

church too suffers from the hostility which comes with the ideological obsession with anti-communism which, in some quarters, is equated with the Gospel. This ideology militates against the Christians' calling to be reconcilers in society." Finally, the two Presbyterian churches in Korea have recently formed a joint theological committee to write position papers on justice, peace and the integrity of creation from a Korean perspective, in preparation for the WARC General Council in Seoul, August 1989.

The National Council of Churches in India promotes "the preferential option for the poor" among its member churches. It coordinates the struggle against caste and class discrimination and strongly defends the integration of ethnic minority groups. In its commitment for more collective and individual justice, it encourages the development of the Dalit theology, an Indian version of liberation theology. The NCC also promotes contacts and dialogue among the various religions of the country. In December 1986, it organized a "Dialogue on Peace with Justice" with 70 participants, representing Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Marxist and Ghandian persuasions. The participants concluded that "the human person in his(/her) existential situation is seeking a state of uninterrupted peace and justice." Both on the global and national level there are many real threats to justice and peace. Because of "inept structures" and "vested interests", the situation can be changed only with great difficulty. "Religion seems to have failed to be sufficiently effective to help (hu)man-kind to find the right solutions to these problems." The conference strongly condemned the use and production of nuclear arms. It recommended that leaders of the various religions and persuasions should undertake "common action wherever violation of peace and justice in society is notified."

In the Philippines, the churches were deeply involved, indeed instrumental, in the recent revolution that overthrew the Marcos régime. In April 1987, the Philippine churches issued a declaration which underscored their commitment to the cause of justice and peace in that region. "We see the peasants deprived of the land they till, the workers enslaved by the very labour meant to dignify them, the urban poor condemned to a life of more inhuman conditions, as well as the arrogance and brutality they are met with when they dare to present their legitimate demands for authentic solutions. Under the pretext of fighting the evils of communism, atheism and satanism, the perpetrators of the armed fight against the toiling masses remain free to complete their evil scheme of exploitation, oppression and domination."

In both Australia and New Zealand, the churches are involved in the struggle for equal rights for the native inhabitants of these countries. The churches have built networks to monitor violations of Aboriginal and Maori land rights and try to assist them in court. In addition, in both countries a strong antinuclear movement is increasingly pressing for a nuclear-free Australasia.

3. South America

The majority of church leaders in South America have sided with the poor and oppressed. In spite of the accusations from the governments and the privileged rich, the churches support the peasants' rightful claim for land reform, and the urban poor in their search for human dignity. They also support the base communities in their rediscovery of the liberating power of the Gospel. Liberation theology is considered a helpful instrument to interpret the people's struggle against domination and exploitation. Liberation is not limited to mere social and political aims. Rather, the struggles for freedom

and liberation are essentially spiritual and are seen in the eschatological perspective of preparing and actually realizing the Kingdom of God.

4. Central America

"The Esquípulas II Peace Agreement, signed by the Central American presidents on 7 August 1987, represents a seed of hope for the peoples of these countries. It has contributed to the creation of a new climate in Central America." This is a quotation from a report of an international ecumenical delegation to Central America (3-15 December 1987). The delegation included members of the Latin American Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, and the WCC. They visited Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, and had meetings with government representatives, church leaders and the people themselves. They came to the conclusion that the peace agreement meets the desire of the people. "People are not only tired of war. There is a growing rejection of war and violence. In fact, there are clear signs of a growing consciousness around the region, especially among the poor and the oppressed, that something must and can be done to reverse the situation. In these highly religious cultures, the churches are playing a new, important role in helping people to confront their realities with a new awareness of their own possibilities and responsibilities. It is not that a radical minority of 'liberation theologians' is fomenting armed rebellion. The fact is that the Gospel itself is a liberating message of hope and source of empowerment. For hope to be real, it must be embodied, lived in concrete ways. The growing realization that this is so has a potentially 'revolutionary' impact. And, indeed, in increasing numbers, people are deciding to take their destinies in their own hands and refusing to be suppliant victims of fate."

The indigenous peoples are also giving witness to their oppressive situation. At a JPIC Consultation on the Integrity of Creation in February-March 1988 in Norway, a Lutheran theologian and native American from the United States addressed the consultation in the name of all indigenous peoples. He noted that the indigenous peoples have been and are the victims of systematic exploitation by oppressive governments. Most of their sacred land has been indiscriminately taken from them. He also noted that indigenous people experience all of this as a disintegration of creation. Having "a relationship of mutual obligation with creation", indigenous people have "maintained an understanding of creation which still knows the spiritual interrelatedness of all things visible and invisible... For the sake of all creation, theology must begin with creation. Just as concerned Christians have begun to learn that true peace can only be realized through the establishment of justice, so now we must begin to learn that justice and peace flow naturally out of a deep respect for all creation".

5. The Caribbean

The Caribbean islands are confronted with internal fragmentation caused by social, ethnic and religious differences. The fragmentation and the internal divisions expose the Caribbean to continuing colonization and recolonization, particularly from North America. The planned CARICOM to establish a common market has practically failed as has the so-called American 1984 Caribbean Marshall Plan. In fact, the failure of these plans exacerbated the situation there, deepening the gap between the masses who are poor and underemployed and the small minority who are rich and generally merciless.

The Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) attempts to provide a forum for its member churches and to coordinate common actions and struggles. "The churches must campaign with vigour against evil. They are called to be prophetic and to challenge those structures and situations which do not make for justice and peace." The CCC considers the following priorities important: Integration of all the islands in one Caribbean Region; the defence of all human rights; the participation of the people in decision-making; social change in obedience to Jesus Christ and in solidarity with the poor; promotion of the liberation process to make the people active agents in determining their own history; counteract the increasing materialism by insisting on the role of the churches and ecumenical collaboration.

During the last years the Caribbean Conference of Churches has intensely followed and monitored developments in Haiti. At various instances it has been the advocate for the suffering people at international gatherings.

7. The Pacific

A resolution on the Pacific, formulated at the Vancouver Assembly, highlighted a series of issues which remain valid in 1988: continued nuclear testing in French Polynesia, the effects of radiation on the health and environment in the Marshall Islands, dumping of nuclear wastes, manoeuvres of submarines carrying nuclear weapons, foreign domination in French Polynesia and Micronesia, the struggle for self-determination and independence of the Kanak population of New Caledonia.

A theological consultation held in 1985 in Suva (Fiji) concluded that the situation in the Pacific is deteriorating. "The loudest cry of the Pacific Islands peoples has to do with their struggles against the domination of external powers to whom these islands are vital for military and strategic purposes." The consultation specifically mentioned the island of Belau, which "courageously defied the mighty United States by upholding its nuclear-free Constitution."

Both Fiji and New Caledonia have been in the news in recent months. The two military coups in Fiji, which underlined the division on the island of two opposing ethnic groups, took the dominant churches by surprise. The Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) condemned the military coups and their subsequent violations of human rights. It expressed the expectation that the rich and powerful will be challenged and that the churches, mindful of the mistaken notion that all that is indigenous and traditional is right, will take the lead towards making possible a life in freedom and dignity for the entire population.

The PCC and WCC both support the rights of the Kanaks in New Caledonia. They are helping the main church of the Kanaks to lead the people, through non-violent means, in their struggle for recognition and full dignity as an independent nation. Against the strategy of the French government, the French churches have also taken the side of the Kanaks. In May 1988, the Synod of the Reformed Church of France expressed its solidarity with the Kanak people: "We believe that peace is possible through the application of justice for all, through the recognition of the dignity and the cultural and social identity of the Kanak people, and through a search for authentic dialogue." The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of France stated that the independence of the Kanak people should be the starting point of fruitful dialogue.

The Pacific Conference of Churches will be holding a JPIC consultation at Malua Theological College, APIA, Western Samoa from 19 September - 1 October, 1988 under the theme "Renewing our Partnership in God's Creation". The objectives of the consultation will be:

a) To tap the biblical and theological resources of Pacific Christian traditions in reflecting on issues of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

b) To analyse the cultural, socio-political and economic implications for the lack of justice and peace destruction of nature in the world, and in the Pacific.

c) To establish and strengthen a solidarity network amongst churches engaged in concrete actions for justice and peace; actions which can be followed up in sub-regional consultations in the next five years.

8. North America

The common struggles of the 'mainline' and Roman Catholic churches in the United States on the issue of peace, justice and creation provide a counter-point to the policies and strategies of the Reagan Administration. The biblical and ethical stand of the churches against the government's military and nuclear strategies made headlines all over the world. The pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference on war and peace (1983) received global publicity. It should be noted, however, that the pastoral letter was preceded by similar condemnations of nuclear war by other churches--the Presbyterian, Methodist, Reformed, Episcopal, United Church of Christ et al.--and that it was prepared by a strong Christian peace movement. The Catholic bishops were criticized for not being consistent by condemning nuclear war while at the same time tolerating nuclear deterrence. The Methodist bishops' document corrects this attitude by also rejecting nuclear deterrence.

In the area of domestic justice, the churches have taken a firm stand against the degradation of social service and health care. They have accused the government of being responsible for the enormous increase of the "new poor". The political and military strategy in Central America, particularly in the case of Nicaragua, has been refuted most unanimously by the mainline churches. The government strategy towards migrants and exiles from Latin America is answered with offering "sanctuary" to them. On this issue, the Presbyterian Church recently stated that "The presence among us of Mexican migrants is more an immediate opportunity to observe the commandment to love God and the neighbour than a cultural or economic threat. Permitting these modern strangers to become neighbours in the name of Christ, we encounter the reality of Christ's presence. The stranger is more likely seen as neighbour when we remember that we are first citizens of God's universal Kingdom and only secondly citizens of the kingdom of this world."

9. Europe

The Vancouver call for the JPIC process has had a real impact on the churches in Western Europe. The concern for survival in the face of a menacing nuclear threat has been extended to the struggle for justice and the integrity of creation. These issues had not been unfamiliar to the churches; through action

groups and movements for justice, peace and the environment, the churches per force had been involved in these issues. But the Vancouver call was important in mobilizing the churches in Europe to greater action and was particularly timely in regard to two specifically European initiatives, namely the "Assisi '88" event and the programme of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) for "Peace with Justice". "Assisi 88" will be an "Ecumenical Dialogue on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation", to be held 6-12 August 1988, in Assisi, Italy. This initiative has evoked an enormous interest not only in the Catholic world, but also among other churches and national and international Christian organizations.

In March 1987, the Conference of European Churches, together with the Council of European Catholic Bishops' Conferences, launched the plan for a European Ecumenical Convocation on "Peace with Justice" to be held in Basel, Switzerland, 15-21 May 1989. Almost all of the European Christian churches have endorsed the plan, which is generally considered as the European Forum within the JPIC process.

In addition, a number of European theologians have given significant study to the JPIC process, particularly in regard to the meaning of "mutual commitment (covenant)", the theology of creation, the historical and theological significance of status confessionis, and the relationship of the Gospel to global economics, peace, human rights and the "principalities and powers" of the world.

Finally, although the churches in Europe are responding differently to the various issues of the JPIC process, all of these churches seem to be involved one way or another. In several countries, for example in Switzerland, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Scotland and the Scandinavian countries, the churches have committed themselves to the process, and important first steps have already been taken. In the Federal Republic of Germany and in the Netherlands the JPIC process is well under way.

In April 1988, following more than a year of preparation, 120 delegates, representing the churches of the Federal Republic of Germany and peace and justice movements, met for the First Meeting of an Ecumenical Forum at Königstein. The results of this meeting are now being discussed in the FRG in preparation for a second gathering this autumn. Among the major points in regard to the peace issue are the following: the churches' task to promote peace through repentance, conversion and reconciliation; the role of warfare in conflict resolution; the place of deterrence in peace-keeping; the limits of just war and just defence. In regard to justice issues, the participants will discuss the international debt crisis, apartheid and the issue of economic sanctions, refugees, just concern for the poor, and the churches' role in promoting legislation that ensures the integrity of creation.

The churches in the Netherlands are presently in the second year of a three-year plan of study and witness within the JPIC process. The plan is aimed at including the 'grassroots' in every step of the process. In their recent "Letter of Faith", the churches have identified particular areas for reflection and discussion, namely, confession of individual and collective sin, participation against the global powers of death, injustice and poverty, war and violence, pollution and depletion. "The covenant God initiates with the human family calls for concrete human covenants and mutual agreements between churches, communities and human persons."

The First Ecumenical Assembly of Churches in the German Democratic Republic on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation took place in Dresden from 12-15 February 1988. This Assembly is the beginning of a process to define issues and challenges that are a concern for many people in the country. 19 different churches and Christian communities, including the Roman Catholic Church, were involved in the event. The secretariat of the Assembly had received more than 10,000 proposals dealing with the three JPIC issues. During the discussions, at which representatives of the grassroots played an active part, the following preliminary emphases emerged: Forms of domestic injustice and global unjust structures, for example, restrictions of individual freedom and cases of discrimination of foreigners. Some participants viewed the "Wall" as a symbol of isolation impeding their direct participation in the struggles for justice in the rest of the world. Nevertheless, there was a strong emphasis on a close connection between the struggle against domestic injustice and the overcoming of global unjust structures. As regards peace, there were mentioned aspects of militarization of the country, insufficient peace education in the schools and the existence of the "enemy" image. In addition, the delegates were critical of nuclear deterrence as a way towards real peace in the world. Concerning the integrity of creation, special attention was given to the impairment of the natural encironment and its consequences, the development and use of alternative sources of energy and the protection of the unborn. Finally, the paarticipant noted that it is the churches' responsibility to initiate the call for an assessment of values leading to new, more responsible lifestyles.

These and other issues have been formulated into 13 group themes for further work. The goal is to find common basic insights and action oriented concepts. A top priority is the unity of "thinking globally and acting locally". The process will lead to the second Assembly, scheduled for October 1988, where the results of the working groups will be presented, discussed and submitted to the churches and local congregations for discussion and reflection. A third Assembly will be held in spring 1989.

The Assembly in Dresden stressed that none of its proposals would succeed, unless they were grounded in a deeply Christian spirituality.

Bishop Toth of the Reformed Church in Hungary, and president of the Christian Peace Conference, suggests that glasnost opens up the possibility for "a new kind of relationship between socialism and religion... We have to rethink the whole process of the churches and of the Christian peace movements in the light of these developments."

The Russian Orthodox Church, of course, both influences and is influenced by this new spirit within the Soviet Union which, according to Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk and Byelorussia, is opening up the priority of morality in science and economic life, in politics and in diplomacy, and in some sense is a return to the traditional values of the Russian people. "This is having a profound effect on the role of Christianity not only in the Soviet Union but internationally. In our interdependent world, in the process of increasing interreligious cooperation, what would intensify the peace activity of every religion is, we believe, a joint religious contribution to the consolidation of peace and justice."

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Resource Materials

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